

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

IT is the height of the London season, and a beautiful day in early summer.

Carriages are setting down their well-dressed freights at the house of Lord Essington, in Berkeley Square: not many carriages; one, now and again, at intervals. It is Thursday; and on Thursday afternoons Lady Essington is always "at home:" and those friends of hers in the great world who remember this, and have time to call, come and do so.

Lady Essington—looking quite an elderly woman now, for many years have elapsed since you saw her last, reader—sits on a sofa in the drawing-room, underneath one of the windows. She wears black silk and crape and a widow's cap. For alas, the good-natured earl, her husband, so kind to all the world, high and low, so genial and so unpretending, has been dead more than twelve months now, and his only son, the Viscount Cardine, is the present earl. The new earl is not married; therefore his mother looks upon this house as her own still; she has made no move to go out of it: it has never occurred to the mind of Lord Essington, her son, to suggest that she should. He is easy and careless; indifferent to most things, except his own pursuits.

Lady Geraldine Hetley stands near the door, welcoming with effusion three middle-aged sisters just coming in, for they have an old bachelor brother who is very rich; and poor Geraldine, though getting towards forty, has not yet given up all hope of being asked to

share somebody's name and fortune. Her hair is thin, her face has acquired a permanently cross expression : the result of indulging habitual ill-temper.

In a corner of the room stands the tea-table; a white cloth, cups and saucers, biscuits and cake are upon it. Behind the table, ready to dispense its favours, sits a graceful girl of middle height, her face one of the sweetest ever looked upon. Her dress is of simple material : a white muslin ground with small lilac sprigs upon it, worked in tambour stitch; ribbons of the same colour fall back from her soft brown hair. Her eyes are brown and soft also; earnest eyes that all the world might trust. Her features, clearly cut, are of the highest type of beauty; the delicate colour on her cheeks is of a soft damask rose.

"What are you about?" asks Geraldine, approaching her with a cross whisper. "Why don't you pour out some tea?"

"I am waiting for four o'clock to strike," was the gentle answer. "Lady Essington said I was not to begin before."

"Nonsense," sharply responded Geraldine. "People want some."

A momentary lull in the hum of the room, which was getting well filled now, broken only by the slight click of cups and saucers, when the groom of the chambers opened the door to make a fresh announcement.

"Miss Pomeroy."

Greeting Geraldine on her way, Joan spoke a little with Lady Essington, and then found a seat for herself beyond the tea-table. Joan looked taller and sterner and darker than of yore : years seldom soften plain women into pretty ones. Joan was passing through London on her way to Pomeroy, and had come by invitation to remain this afternoon and to dine. She had leisure, sitting in that quiet corner, to look about her, and was doing so when she found herself addressed.

"Will you take some tea?"

It was the sweetest voice Joan had ever heard. Looking at the speaker, standing there before her, the cup of tea held out, she thought it the sweetest face she had ever seen. Mechanically Joan took the tea, a little lost in surprise.

"Not any cake, thank you. You—you are not Lucy Blake?"

"Oh no," was the smiling answer. "But I think Lucy will be here presently; Lady Lucy said she should come herself, and bring her."

Joan wondered whom she could be—this most lovely girl who seemed to be domiciled with the Essingtons. When Geraldine sat down by her, to take some tea on her own account, it gave Joan the opportunity of asking.

"Would you not like to take your bonnet off at once, Miss Pomeroy?"

"Thank you; presently. Who is that beautiful girl?"

Geraldine looked round the room, anywhere but at the tea-table. "Which girl?" she asked.

"Here: close by. Handing some tea, just now, to that French count."

"Oh—she," slightly spoke Geraldine. "It is Frank Hetley's eldest girl—Annaline."

"To be sure; I might have known it," cried Joan, with sudden remembrance. "She has just the same sweet frank face that she had as a child. Is she staying with you?"

"I am sorry to say she is. Mamma *would* bring her back with us from Florence, though I told her how it would be—that we should want to get rid of her when we could not. She thought Annaline might be useful to us here during the season. Of course we make her *that*; but mamma would like to get her out of the house now, and we don't know how to do it."

"Why do you wish it?"

"She has turned out to be the most crafty, deceitful, designing minx possible: will be the ruin of the family if we don't take care. She is plotting for it."

Fresh arrivals carried Geraldine away to her duties, leaving Miss Pomeroy somewhat puzzled. If she were a reader of countenances, the young lady in question was anything but crafty or deceitful. A few minutes more, and, quite incidentally, she got a little enlightenment from Lady Essington, upon whose sofa Joan had then found room. It came through Joan's asking after the earl.

"Edmund?—oh, he is very well," responded Lady Essington, in a tart tone, as though the mention of her son's name displeased her. "I wonder he is *not* here this afternoon. I'm sure, be where we will now, he is at our tail."

"And do you not like him to be?" asked Joan, remembering that in the days gone by the young man had erred on the other side—that of roaming.

"Not when he is attracted to us by a pretentious upstart of a girl, who would like to draw him into an engagement," said the countess. "Oh yes; I daresay you know who it is I am speaking of—that little chit opposite, Annaline Hetley. I brought her home with us from Florence quite out of compassion, for her father and mother are poorer than ever, have much ado to make a living of it, now my husband and his foolish help are gone. They were glad to let her come. I made a half promise that I would get the girl presented and stand the cost of a plain white silk dress for it. Will *though!*"

"What has she done?"

"What has she not done—cajoling Edmund by every trick and turn—practising her wiles upon him morning, noon, and night!" retorted the angry countess. "I declare to you we are beginning to fear Edmund may forget himself, and take a step that can never be

redeemed. Fancy what our feelings would be, at seeing *her* his wife. I suppose you don't happen to know of any friend about to travel to Florence, Miss Pomeroy? I wish I could hear of somebody going who would take charge of her. I should be thankful to pack her off to-day."

"Mamma, you are so engrossed with your wrongs that you cannot see and hear me," cried a pretty, laughing woman, who had been waiting to speak. Joan shook hands with her warmly. It was Lady Lucy Blake, once Lucy Hetley. The reader may remember her as having been with the young Lady of Pomeroy when they discovered the stains of blood on the wedding-dress. By her side stood her daughter Lucy, who had been presented only two days ago.

"What treason has mamma been whispering to you about that poor child Annaline?" asked Lady Lucy, taking the seat which her mother quitted to pay attention elsewhere. "That she is designing and wary and wicked, I suppose? Don't believe a word of it, Miss Pomeroy. The girl is as simple-minded, true-hearted a girl as ever lived. She always was, and she always will be."

"I confess she looks so," remarked Joan.

"She *is* so. It is too bad of mamma and Geraldine. Very wrong indeed of them. Because Edmund has fallen in love with Annaline, and persecutes her with his attentions, they heap blame upon her. I don't believe she likes him—or would have him. I and Colonel Blake go to Ireland next week, and I declare I would carry her with me out of it all, only that the little ones at home have had a slight attack of scarlatina. You are going down to Pomeroy, I hear?"

"Yes; to-morrow," said Joan.

"How is Mrs. Pomeroy? Is she still at the abbey?"

"Oh, yes. She is quite well, I believe."

"Do they still see ghosts there?" laughingly rejoined Lady Lucy. But she repented of the thoughtless jest when she saw the flush of pain it brought to Joan's pale face.

"*They* were laid with my poor brother, Guy," Joan answered, gravely. "The superstition was all buried with him."

"I beg your pardon," frankly spoke Lady Lucy, putting her hand affectionately upon Joan's.

"Go with Miss Pomeroy up stairs, Annaline," imperiously spoke Geraldine later, when she seemed no longer needed at the tea-table. "She would like to take her bonnet off."

In her unobtrusive, gentle way, Annaline helped Joan to make her brief toilette. It was quite evident that her life had been spent in being useful to other people.

"Thank you, my dear," said Joan, taking her hand when it was over. "I am sure you have a kind heart."

Annaline blushed. It was not often that praise was accorded to *her*.

"Are you very happy here?"

Tears rose with the suddenness of the question.

"I should like you to tell me all, as you would tell it to your mother, child. Perhaps I may be of some use to you. Things are not very smooth for you here, I gather."

"Not very," answered Annaline, her voice unsteady.

"Lord Essington loves you, does he not?" pursued Joan, going to the root at once, in her straightforward way. "Do you love him?"

"I do not even like him," said Annaline. "I *could* not love him; I *could* not marry him. I have tried to let him see this all along, and have kept out of his way when possible. Lady Essington must have seen this, and yet—and yet—they are so angry with me."

She broke down with a burst of tears. That every word was truth, Joan could see.

"Lord Essington spoke to me this morning; he took the opportunity when they were up stairs with the dressmaker. I told him then it was quite *impossible*, and I begged him to let me alone in future."

"Did he ask you to be his wife?"

"Yes," faltered Annaline.

"Well, my dear, it would be a very advantageous marriage for you. And I think Lord Essington might make a good husband, wild though he has been in his day. It is time he settled down."

"Quite time, if he is to settle at all; he is forty years old," acquiesced Annaline. "But I would not be his wife for the world."

"Perhaps you like some one else?"

And evidently, though Joan had but spoken carelessly, Annaline did like some one else. She turned away to hide her embarrassment.

"Who is it, my dear? Are you likely to marry him?"

"Oh, it is no one; no one, indeed, Miss Pomeroy," she earnestly said, the blushes dying away in tears. "I do assure you I am not likely to marry; perhaps I never shall. There's no chance of it. I—I wish," she continued, in a timid, deprecating tone, "that I could hear of something to do."

"Something to do?"

"I cannot continue to stay here; it is most uncomfortable, and they want me gone. And poor mamma can do without me at home; she has Mary and Clarice. If I could do something for myself! Be a governess—or anything of that."

Joan paused. "To relieve them at home, you mean?"

"Yes. We are so many: three girls and four boys; besides Frank, who has got his commission, and is away. The boys are the youngest; and they all have to be educated, you know, Miss Pomeroy. And papa has so little to do it with. My education has

been thoroughly good. Surely it would be no harm to make use of it?"

"That would be for your parents' consideration, my dear."

"I think they would be glad," whispered Annaline. "At least, mamma would; she and I have talked of it sometimes. Grand-papa, her father, was not at all rich, and she might have gone out as governess herself, had she not married. Indeed, I cannot stay in this house. I think it would give me nervous fever."

"Miss Hetley is wanted in the drawing-room," said a woman servant, putting in her head at this juncture. "My lady wishes to know what she means by absenting herself."

"Miss Hetley has been detained by me," spoke Joan, in her haughtiest manner. "Have the goodness to tell your lady that I, Miss Pomeroy, say so."

Lord Essington came home to dinner: a talkative man, with fat cheeks, a light moustache, and a bald head. He sought occasional opportunities of whispering to Annaline during the evening, and Joan felt sure he had not accepted his refusal.

Not less picturesque than of yore, with its Gothic casements and grey walls, covered in places with their green moss, looked the old abbey of Pomeroy, as Joan approached it in the twilight of the summer's evening. She generally visited it once a year, often remaining for several months, for she and the Lady of Pomeroy were closer friends than ever.

Many years had elapsed since the death—the real death—of Guy. They had been curiously uneventful, compared with the troublous years of excitement that had preceded them. Save for the gradually increasing growth of the two children—the young lord and Mary—the time appeared to have had nothing to mark its passing. The noble lad of those past days, the self-willed, precocious little girl, were now man and woman.

Upon the death of Guy, which cleared up all the mystery, set straight what had been crooked, things were reorganized in their proper order. The young lord was the indisputable lord from henceforth, and his mother assumed the state and duties of the reigning lady. She retained the south wing, in which she had previously dwelt, but she also occupied, in addition, the whole of the front pile, and took upon herself the vast household hitherto deemed essential to the Lords of Pomeroy. Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter moved into the north wing: it had been their abode since then. Not but that Mary continued to make herself at home in the abbey, just as if the whole of it were her especial property. Leolin had at once applied to be readmitted into the diplomatic service of his country; he was appointed to a post on the continent, and there took up his abode with his wife.

One change the Lady of Pomeroy had hastened to make, and

that was connected with the west wing. "Do it as soon as I am gone, Sybilla," Guy had said to her in dying; "let the haunted rooms be renovated and made into cheerful, useful habitations." The nun's ghost itself would not have known that west wing now. The subterranean passage from the keep had been blocked up at either end with good bricks and mortar. No more ghostly surprises should occur if Sybilla could hinder them. A handsome entrance to the west wing was made from the quadrangle, and a smaller one from the south wing. Windows, large, wide, sun-admitting, looking to the open country, were inserted into the dull dead walls that once had been, and the rooms they lighted were made bright with modern decorations and furniture. The lady judged rightly, no doubt, in making that tabooed wing the most cheerful wing of all. When her son married, that should be his children's nursery, she said.

Least of all would you have recognized the haunted tower. It was converted into an observatory for Rupert, the young lord having evinced a strong propensity for star-gazing. And Miss Pomeroy had begged that the nun's picture should not be destroyed, but placed in her own bed-chamber, the one which had always been hers at the abbey and always would be. Poor Joan had perforce felt compelled to give up many of the superstitions which had been so dear to her belief and heart; but she liked to recall the past stories and to retain their mementoes. All these changes and renovations were long ago past; the abbey had almost forgotten that the west wing was ever gloomy, ever dreaded.

The carriage, containing Joan, drew up at the gateway, and she found the Lady of Pomeroy standing in the hall to receive her. Time had worn better with Sybilla than with Joan: she was still the same nobly-beautiful woman that she had ever been. No one throughout the county was more respected than she; more sought after, more beloved.

"I am so glad to have you again, Joan! I began to think you were lost."

"We got in an hour and a half behind time," said Joan, as they entered the lady's favourite sitting-room. "Some accident had occurred to a train on the line, and we could not get by. I hope you have not waited dinner."

"Of course I have. Do you think I could ——"

"How do you do, Aunt Joan?"

With very much of the same self-assertion of manner that had characterised her childhood, Mary Pomeroy entered. She was one-and-twenty now, and a beautiful girl, upright and stately, but not tall. Very beautiful she looks this evening in her low dress of pale blue silk, a gold chain and cross lying on her neck. She is not much like Guy, except that she has his eyes; not much like her mother. Her hair is of a light brown shade, her features are faultless, and the colour on her cheeks may be

likened to a delicate shade of vermillion, rather than of rose. Mary had been educated at the convent, only leaving it when she was nineteen, and then with reluctance. She was wont to say, in her peculiarly non-reticent fashion, that, had fate not marked her out to be the Lady of Pomeroy, she would have liked to stay at the convent for life. Last year she had gone to London to make her obeisance to the Queen, and had remained for a few weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Capel, who presented her. Mary and her mother did not yet get on entirely well together: the girl was too daringly independent, too fond of carrying out her own will, as she had been when a child. Mrs. Pomeroy led a most retired life, and that did not suit Mary. She had become what the French call *dévôte*, was fond of chapel, penances, prayers, and fastings. Mary did not like it at all; there was too much of it, she boldly told her mother; and she escaped frequently to her aunt the Lady of Pomeroy, by whom she was taken about on visits.

"I have come to dine with you, Aunt Sybilla."

"Surely, my love. I wished to persuade your mother to come."

"As if you could do that! This is one of mamma's self-imposed fasts, Aunt Joan. You don't know what a *dévôte* she is now."

"But that is what you ought not to say, Mary," admonished Joan, who by no means always approved of Miss Mary. "I fear you try your mamma."

"Mamma tries me," corrected the young lady. "'You must not do this, Mary; you must not do that,' she says. You don't know what it is, Aunt Joan, or how fearfully dull the life I have to lead. I have no companion, not a soul to speak to, but the lady here. I am not sure but it would be best to run away."

"Where should you run to?" grimly asked Joan.

"Anywhere. I *shall* too—unless Rupert speedily comes home."

"What news have you from Rupert?" questioned Joan of the lady. "Is he still abroad?"

"Yes, still abroad," answered Sybilla with a suppressed sigh. "The last letter I had from him, was dated Vienna.—But, Joan, you had better prepare for dinner."

The young Lord of Pomeroy had been away from home for six years now, on and off: paying only flying visits to it between whiles. At first, in pursuance of his college education; later, for his own pleasure. When he became of age he stayed for a month or two in London, was presented to his Sovereign and her Royal Consort, and made acquaintance with people of his own degree, old friends of the Pomeroy. Afterwards he had gone abroad on a visit to his Uncle Leolin and Lady Anna, and—he was abroad still.

Sybilla had expected him back long ago. On the return of each Christmas-tide, she had thought that he would certainly spend it with her: and she had found herself mistaken. Rupert wrote

frequently, most affectionate letters, in nearly all of which he *spoke* of coming home. But he did not come. The lady felt aggrieved, Mary angry; and Mrs. Pomeroy was uneasy lest the golden dreams which she still cherished for her daughter, should be imperilled.

"Mary is wilful as ever, I find," observed Joan the next day, when speaking with Mrs. Pomeroy.

"She is more so," sighed Mrs. Pomeroy. "I know not what to do with her; I am perpetually haunted by fears that she will outrage custom and propriety by some intolerable act. She will gallop off to the convent alone, without even a groom behind her, and gallop back again after dark. Dear sister Mildred—now the Lady Abbess, as no doubt you have heard—is perfectly scandalised; but all she can say to Mary makes no impression."

"Mary complains that she is dull here," observed Joan.

"She is so. How can I help that? The lady takes her out, but she does not visit much during this absence of Rupert's—an absence which appears to me, Joan, to be curiously prolonged. I can see that Mary is resenting it in her heart; it makes her more restless than she would be."

"Mary always seemed to think the world was made for her own gratification. Why should she allow Rupert's movements to trouble her?"

"Why should she not?" retorted Mrs. Pomeroy, but her low voice was not raised or her subdued manner lifted. "She is to be his wife, I suppose."

"Are you cherishing that idea?"

"Certainly. Have you anything to urge against it, Joan?"

"I have not. I should like to see her, poor Guy's child, Lady of Pomeroy. A dispensation would have to be sought, I expect; they are cousins——"

"That is easily obtained."

"But," continued Joan, unmindful of the interruption, "I cannot help remembering that another may object to it, whose will in the matter is of more consequence than mine—Rupert himself. When young men go out into the world, they sometimes forget home likings and home ties."

The very thought that was beginning to render uneasy Mrs. Pomeroy. "It has occurred to me lately that I might take a companion for Mary," she resumed, quitting the other subject: "a young gentlewoman of her own age, who would share her pursuits. I feel nearly sure it would answer. What do you think of it? I wish I knew where to look for one who would be suitable for the post."

A companion—a young gentlewoman, of Mary's own age. Over Joan's mind came rushing the image of Annaline Hetley. She might serve *both* the girls by bringing her here.

"I know of one," she answered, rather impulsively, "and I do think it would be a good thing for Mary. Yes: if you approve, Mrs. Pomeroy, we will write for her to-day."

CHAPTER XXXII.

NAOMI'S REVELATION.

THE two young ladies stood gazing at one another. Mary, all impulse, had seized upon the notion presented to her of a companion; and Annaline Hetley had come down without delay. The young stranger stood, meek and timid, before Mrs. Pomeroy, her sweet face blushing, her anxious mind uneasy lest she should be disapproved. Joan Pomeroy had said, and with truth, that Mary had always appeared to think the world was made for her special gratification: poor Annaline felt grateful to obtain the smallest possible corner in it.

"I shall like you very much," cried Mary, in her outspoken fashion. "My aunt Joan said you were pretty, and good, and nice; but I did not picture you so pretty and nice as this. Will you stay with me always?"

"Yes—if you wish it—if you can let me be of use to you," answered Annaline, grateful almost to tears at the warmth of her welcome.

Impulsive, good-hearted, proud, self-asserting, generous: Mary had all these and other, contradictory, qualities. On the first day of Annaline's arrival, she could not make enough of her. They played duets together, they sat side by side at dinner, they wandered in the garden in the evening sunset, they talked of their past experiences; Mary freely, Annaline so far as she dared, for she did not yet feel at home at Pomeroy. Annaline's past appeared to have lain in hard work: in lessons and close study, in useful sewing, in helping her mother with the younger children, in patiently sitting by anyone's side who was sick. Mary's experiences seemed to lie in exercising her own will and pleasure, in having swayed the world around her, including Pomeroy, in small power of all kinds, in revelling in indulgence.

"But you could not have quite your own way in the convent," thoughtfully observed Annaline, as they resumed the conversation the following day.

"I had it very greatly—more than the other girls would have thought of hoping for," said Mary. And she was right. The convent had begun by petting, loving, and indulging the self-willed little girl, and the convent found it had to continue to do it. The Pomeroyes were the chief patrons and benefactors of the convent, and this pretty plaything was the child of one of the Pomeroy lords.

"Eight years you were there, only coming to the abbey for Sundays

and sometimes for the holidays!" repeated Annaline. "It must have been like a home. Were you not sorry to leave it?"

Mary nodded. "I never would have left it but that I am to be Lady of Pomeroy."

The colour suddenly rose and fell on Annaline's transparent cheeks. Some emotion stirred her. Mary went on, not having observed it.

"When the time came for me to quit the convent, and I found how much it would cost me, and saw how truly happy I had been there, I hesitated. I did indeed. I think I was the best part of an hour making up my mind whether I should stay on, or not. But, though it cost me something to give it up, it would have cost me more to give up the Lord of Pomeroy. As his wife, you know, I shall sway the world: so much of it as lies around us."

"Yes," replied Annaline, in a faint tone, feeling that a reply was expected from her.

"I will drive you to the convent this afternoon," added Mary. "Grandmamma will think I should take you first of all to her, but she must wait. We shall have to be back in time for dinner at seven. We dine with the lady, you know. I think she invited us purposely: because it is one of mamma's impromptu starving days."

Accordingly in the afternoon the young ladies started for the convent in Mary's pony carriage. They were back about six, and hastened to dress. Both came down in white silk. Mary's was new and costly; Annaline's a turned gown that had been given her by Lady Anna: but it looked fresh and dainty, and the girls themselves were beautiful.

"How lovely you look!" said Mary, regarding her critically. "You shall be my best friend always, Annaline; as my sister."

Passing through the cloisters, they gained the archway and entered the fine old hall. Very much to Mary's surprise there stood in the hall the Lady of Pomeroy, Joan by her side, and behind them a formidable array of the upper servants; all wearing an aspect of expectation.

"What's to do now?" cried Mary. "Are you ceremoniously assembled here to welcome us, Aunt Sybilla? Very attentive of you, I must say."

"Hush, Mary, my dear; it is Rupert that we are about to welcome. My son Rupert. His carriage is now coming up the sweep. Listen!"

It was even so. After his long absence, Rupert was returning with no more notice than this. Half an hour ago his mother had received an avant courier from Owlstone to say he was on his way.

The carriage thunders in at the gateway and stops. Throw wide the entrance. Cox, the custodian and chief retainer of the abbey, walks in with the air of a royal marshal, making his announcement.

"The Lord of Pomeroy"

And with far less of pretence comes in Rupert after him. But he

looks a lord : ay, and the Lord of Pomeroy. Right noble, stately, grand as any Lord of Pomeroy that ever preceded him ; with the high, finely-carved features of his ancestors, with his own wonderful violet eyes and their sweet expression.

To his mother first ; and it seems that she will never release him. Aunt Joan claims the next embrace. Then he turns, looking half dazzled with the sea of faces ; sees Mary, and is advancing to her, when his eye suddenly catches the blushing face of Annaline Hetley.

As if it were some joyous sight that unexpectedly opens upon him, Rupert turns to her, neglecting Mary, his countenance overspread with a sudden radiance, his hands outstretched. He takes both her hands in his, and speaks in a soft glad whisper.

"Annaline ! I did not expect to see you here. This is a surprise."

Her own face has turned white as a lily. She withdraws her hands from his, shrinking from the notice they are attracting, and falls into the background behind anyone whose robes will shield her. Rupert appears to recollect himself, and looks round at others.

"You have forgotten *me* !"

The words, spoken in a tone of haughty pain, come from Mary Pomeroy. Rupert gazes at her for a half second, and then takes her hands as he had taken Annaline's.

"It is really you, Mary ! With so many dear faces of welcome, I feel bewildered."

The servants come next ; and then Rupert conducts his mother up stairs. Later, they sit down to the banquet. A grand banquet, to-night, held in the state banqueting hall, hastily made in honour of the lord's arrival. Father Andrew, jovial as ever in his increasing years, says grace, but Mrs. Pomeroy has declined to appear. She does not allow any pleasure, no matter what may be the temptation, to interfere with these, her days of penance.

"You have come home to stay ?" asks Father Andrew of the lord.

"I hope so. For good."

"That's well. The lady has missed you sadly."

"I am sure she has," replies Rupert, with a loving glance at his mother. "But," he adds, as if in apology to her, "it was better for me to remain and get all my rovings over, than to come home unsatisfied, wanting to go back again. My home will be my home now : so far as I believe, I shall not care to quit it."

"And I retract the words I spoke to you. And I am ashamed of myself for having been beguiled into speaking them to one so deceitful. *My friend*, I called you ; my friend henceforth for life. I would rather make a friend of a serpent than of you !"

With all the cold, haughty, repelling scorn that the Pomeroy could put on at will, stood Mary Pomeroy as she spoke the above

denouncement to Annaline. It was the morning of the day following the young lord's arrival, and after breakfast. Annaline was seated quietly in the red room, copying some music, when Mary Pomeroy entered, and began to reproach her.

"Indeed, indeed, I am not deceitful," pleaded Annaline, the tears of dismay filling her eyes as she rose from her seat. "I try to be true always."

"Very true, was it not, to pretend to me you did not know the Lord of Pomeroy," sarcastically rejoined Mary. "When you and he met each other yesterday as if you were on terms of the deepest intimacy—hand clasping hand! If there be one vice we Pomeroyes despise above all other vices, it is deceit."

"Oh, pray forgive me!—pray remember!" shivered Annaline. "I did not *pretend*. I did not say anything. I never mentioned the Lord of Pomeroy."

"I mentioned him," flashed Mary. "I spoke of him a hundred times yesterday, and you did not respond. You appeared not to know him; tacitly let me think that he was a stranger to you: you made me believe so. If you call not that deceit, what do you call it?"

"I did not like to say I knew him. Had you only asked me whether I knew him, I should have told you all. I meant to tell you when I was a little less of a stranger here; I should have liked to tell the lady that I knew her son."

Mary threw back her head. "You cannot excuse yourself to me; we Pomeroyes are accustomed to straightforward dealing. Pray when and where did you meet the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"Last year at Leolin Pomeroy's," explained Annaline. "Lady Anna invited me to Vienna, and I was staying with them when he came. Afterwards, when I was back at home, he came to Florence."

"Did he stay long?"

"Yes, for he fell into some trouble, and ——"

Mary's dark grey eyes were shooting forth their anger. "Fell into trouble? The Lord of Pomeroy! How dare you presume to traduce him?"

"It is true," meekly urged Annaline. "It was not wicked trouble, only political. Some friends of his were staying in Florence, and he was drawn into it by them. The authorities wanted to proceed against him: he was of high degree and his friends were not; not worth meddling with: papa had to exercise his best diplomacy to prevent it. It took a great deal of time, and of money, too, to put it right: money of the lord's."

"And your people were intimate with him during the process?"

"Yes. For two weeks of it he was in our house. Papa would not let him show himself abroad: he might have been taken. That would have complicated the matter greatly: perhaps have taken it altogether beyond papa's hands."

"I should like to hear what this great bugbear was from Rupert

himself. And to *you*, I presume, was assigned the task of entertaining him?"

Not throughout the interview had so disagreeable a tone been assumed by Mary as now. A swift, painful blush, at what it seemed to imply, swept over Annaline's face.

"It was mamma who entertained him, I suppose—if he wanted special entertainment. I was not at home."

"Oh."

"Our house at Florence is small; to accommodate the Lord of Pomeroy, I and Mary had to give up our room, so we went for those two weeks to stay with some friends who live at Leghorn."

"All the same, you have been well acquainted with the Lord of Pomeroy. And you could come here to his home, to his own family, and not acknowledge it. Very honourable conduct indeed, Miss Hetley."

Mary swept from the room. Annaline sighed as she sat down to her copying again. To what use reiterate her assertion that she had neither intended nor thought of deceit? In truth, she had been too timid, too shy to avow the acquaintanceship with the Lord of Pomeroy, unless special opportunity had been afforded her: and that had not occurred, for no one had talked of him to her. Annaline had been kept in the background all her life, and during her stay at Lady Essington's had been so put down that she could not possibly assert herself. Any information asked for she freely gave, but she could offer none.

Her tears falling, her fingers busy with their task, she was interrupted by the Lord of Pomeroy, who had come in to pay a visit to the north wing.

"Where are they all?" he cried, gaily.

"Mrs. Pomeroy is not yet home from chapel I think," replied Annaline, surreptitiously wiping away the tears.

"What are you crying for, Annaline?" he asked, coming forward to seat himself at the opposite side of the table.

"Not much," she answered. "It is nothing."

"Thinking of home, I suppose. How came you to leave Berkeley Square so suddenly?"

"I—was not very happy there. And when Miss Joan wrote to say I might come here as companion, I was glad to start at once."

"Nobody is happy at Lady Essington's, that I ever heard of," remarked the young lord. "I was surprised, though, Annaline, when I called there on Tuesday night and found you gone."

"Did they not tell you I was here?"

"No. Geraldine would not tell me anything—except that you had been very wicked indeed in Berkeley Square, and Aunt Joan had come to the rescue by sending you somewhere else. I thought the shortest way would be to come down and ask Aunt Joan where the 'somewhere else' was, little thinking what my reward would be."

"Did you want to know?" she asked, bending her face over the copying. "Why should you?"

"I did want to know. Though I don't think I can tell you 'why' to-day. About this wickedness of yours?" added Rupert, a smile lighting his eyes: "what was it? Did you steal one of Geraldine's ancient lovers from her? it must have been something of the kind, judging by her tartness. Lady Essington was gone to bed with a cold, or I should have got it all out of her."

Annaline was carefully scratching out a blot that her trembling pen had made, and did not answer.

"Had Essington anything to do with it? Come, confess to me!"

A startled glance went upwards from her eyes. His tone was significant. Had Geraldine betrayed *that*?

"Have you seen papa and mamma lately?" she asked, rather hurriedly.

"I saw them all, for I took Florence on my way home. And I have some news for you."

"Yes?"

"Mary is going to reward the constancy of that young attaché who has been dying for her so long."

"Oh!" exclaimed Annaline. "You must mean Charles Seymour. I am so glad! Mary does like him."

"Seymour? Yes, that's his name. A tall, thin, near-sighted fellow."

"And papa has consented?"

"In so far as that he does not interdict it." He had had to live upon bread and cheese himself, he told Seymour, through marrying when he and his wife had nothing to marry upon: if he and Mary chose to be so foolish as to do the same, they might; but he thought they would have to make the bread suffice without the cheese."

"Dear papa! But Charles may get a rise."

"He may. I suppose my Uncle Leolin will have to look after him. What is it that you are copying so industriously?"

"One of my manuscript songs. Miss Pomeroy wished me to copy it for her."

"And now tell me what you are doing, here, at Pomeroy."

"I came to be companion to Miss Mary Pomeroy. If—if she will only put up with my poor abilities, my wish to please her, and let me see what she wants and how best to serve her, I daresay I shall get on here. It is far pleasanter than being a governess."

"Does the alternative lie between the two?"

"Yes, I fear so. I must be brave, and do my best. We are so many at home you know, and so much has to be spent on the boys."

"I see," said he in a grave tone, but nevertheless there was a dancing smile in his eyes. "And now, as you must have done enough of that work for one morning, suppose you come with me

into the grounds. I should like to show you all the dangerous places: the rocks down which you may pitch, and the lake in which a false step might drown you."

"I don't know whether I *may* go," replied Annaline, her heart beating with delight at the tempting prospect. "Mary Pomeroy might not care to go—and I do not know where she is."

And when Mrs. Pomeroy got back from her prolonged devotions, she found Annaline still copying, and the Lord of Pomeroy talking to her.

That Mary, the haughty, exclusive, proud girl, who believed all the world was made for her, including Rupert, should have looked on with flashing eye and indignant brow, when she saw another made more of by him than she was, will readily be believed, tenderly excused. Annaline Hetley was but her companion, in position infinitely beneath her, a stranger at best; and for the Lord of Pomeroy at his home-coming to turn from herself, to pay his first devoirs to the girl, savoured to her mind of almost a gratuitous insult. No wonder Mary took it to heart, little marvel that she spoke out her scorn when she found the offender alone the following morning. Smarting under the blow, nothing could have then convinced her that Miss Hetley was not a perfect mask of duplicity.

She had projected a charming ride the previous day, and described to Annaline the horse she should ride and that should be kept as her own exclusive property; a horse as pretty as the favourite one she herself rode. Of course that was at an end now. So, upon bringing her reproaches to Miss Hetley to a conclusion, Mary rode forth alone. In her independent fashion, she said nothing to anyone; asked nobody's leave to go.

The first thing she noticed, when about to mount, was that Jeffs, the lord's coachman, was there to attend her, taking the place of her own groom, Lamp. It did not please her. Not but that she liked Jeffs the better of the two, but she was just in the mood to show temper at anything and everything.

"Why are *you* here, Jeffs? Where's Lamp?"

"Lamp is bad with his rheumatics this morning, Miss Mary. He couldn't venture to ride a horse. Fact is, Miss Mary, he be getting old, a'most past his work," added Jeffs.

"Old! I don't believe Lamp's as old as you are."

"He wants just two years o' my age, Miss Mary: but he's a good twenty years older in lack o' strength. I be one o' the wiry ones; shall last out brave to a hundred, I think sometimes. Lamp's all quakes and pains, been a martyr to 'em."

That Lamp, with his "quakes and pains" could be of no use to her this morning, appeared evident. Mary mounted without saying more, and cantered off, Jeffs behind her.

She allowed her horse to take almost its own course. It was a hot morning, but Mary did not heed it; the slight breeze fanned

her face as she made for the common. Onwards towards the pine forest now rode Mary. The cottage of Naomi Rex came into view : an impulse took the young lady that she would call and ask after her. Whence do they arise, these impulses ? Sometimes they are weightily fraught, either for good or for evil.

Mary reined in her horse at the gate. Bridget heard, and came out smiling. For some months past Naomi had been ailing : there was no particular disorder, Mr. Norris said ; it was but the weakness of old age. She was between eighty and ninety. Her mind was partially gone ; that is, she was childish at times ; though at intervals clear enough. Naomi's little maid, Ann, had grown up and gone the way of other young women—got married : and Mrs. Pomeroy had spared Bridget for a time to take care of Naomi. Or, rather, Mary had : for she had proposed and settled it.

"How is she to-day, Bridget ?"

"Just the same, Miss Mary. I've but now got her up. Would you not like to come in and see her ?"

"I think I will. Jeffs."

"She has been rambling like anything this morning," observed Bridget, as Jeffs took the horse and Mary went into the house. "Something's been troubling her about the late lord, your poor papa, Miss Mary. I can't help fancying that she has dreams at night, and then gets mithered about 'em the next day."

Naomi was sitting at the open window, her dim eyes wandering out to the features of the landscape it looked upon : the blue sea on the right, lying calm and beautiful under the clear sky, the convent chimneys rising to the left, the conspicuous grand old abbey in front. At the first moment the old woman recognised Mary, and strove to rise on her tottering legs to drop her humble curtsy ; but Mary gently pushed her down on her seat again and sat down by her.

"It's very good of our young lady, is it not, aunt, to come up to see you this hot morning."

"Very good, very good," vaguely assented Naomi, her eyes wandering again—and perhaps her mind also. Bridget, having thus settled them, whisked out to hold a gossip with Jeffs. It had been beyond Bridget's philosophy to forego *that*.

"What do you see particularly in the abbey, Naomi ?" questioned Mary, perceiving that the old lady was regarding it most attentively.

"I was looking for him to come safe back," answered Naomi, in quite an awestruck whisper. "He rode forth just now. Hark ! perhaps we shall hear his horse's hoofs."

"Who rode forth ?"

"The lord."

Just at first, Mary thought she alluded to the present lord ; that she had really seen Rupert ride out. But the next moment's reflection showed her the fallacy of that. Even quick and young eyes could scarcely have discerned a horseman at that distance.

And she knew that Naomi had relapsed into one of her mental wanderings.

"What good sight you must have, Naomi!" she said, laughing pleasantly. "*I* should not know the lord from here."

Naomi placed her finger upon Mary's sleeve, speaking solemnly. It became evident that she thought she was addressing Joan.

"He rode forth just now, Miss Joan; I saw him. He has gone to ask that false woman to be his wife. He couldn't go from his fate, you know, in the teeth of the Prediction; and she and her mother came and took the White House of you Pomeroy's, and so—he met it. No, Guy Pomeroy could not go aside from his fate."

"It is *papa* her poor old head is running upon, not Rupert," thought Mary.

"It is said, you know, Miss Joan, that he won her by a lie: but we've never understood it, for all the Lords of Pomeroy that I have known have been true and honourable. Anyway, be it as it would, that was no just cause for her to turn upon him and disgrace herself. It disgraced you all, Miss Joan; it entailed a life-long stain on her child, sweet little Miss Mary, for the shame of her mother's folly must cling to her as long as her young life shall last."

"What does she mean?" thought Mary, her face growing painfully hot.

"And it led him to murder Rupert, you know, Miss Joan. While we took it, all those years, to be the lord that had died, and mourned for him, and put up masses for his soul, it was Rupert. The poor lord was an exile, wasting away his days in pain and sorrow, never as much as looking on the pretty face of his only child."

Wild though the words were, there seemed "method in them." Some of the things she spoke of Mary knew to be facts: her father's supposed death, for instance, when it had been Rupert's.

"Naomi," she said, her voice more timid than it had ever been, as if she dreaded the answer, "why do you imagine such things? Mamma never did anything wrong."

Naomi looked puzzled—her flow of thought was checked for the moment. She put her hand to her brow and gazed full in Mary's face.

"Your mamma, Miss Joan?—no, I don't think she did: I never heard it. Anyway, she was gone before Guy's wife brought the disgrace on him. How dared she play off her pranks with Mr. Rupert to shame the lord before us all?" added the old woman with startling vehemence. "Was it not enough honour for her that she had been made the lord's own wife? Shouldn't that have contented her, without making their names a by-word?"

"What on earth are you chattering about, Aunt Naomi?" broke in Bridget, who had returned to hear this treason, and halted at the door in temporary surprise and dismay. "Miss Mary, don't you heed her; when she sets off on her brain rambles, she invents the most outrageous stories it is possible to imagine."

"What wrong was it that mamma did, Bridget?" questioned Mary, standing up before the servant.

"Wrong that she did?—Well now!—if ever I heard the like of that?" retorted Bridget, attempting to pass the question off in a show of astonishment. But to Mary's watchful senses, alive and alert just now, the faint pause the woman had made, the slightly evasive ring in the tone, was clearly perceptible.

"What was it, I ask you, Bridget?"

"It was *nothing*, Miss Mary," spake the woman, resolutely. "There. I'm sure I don't know what aunt's head runs on half her time. Only a day or two ago, she fancied Father Andrew and Mr. Norris were up here card-playing; she did, if you'll believe me."

Mary said no more. She bade Naomi good morning, and went out with Bridget, mounted her horse, and rode slowly away. Bridget returned to read her aunt a lecture on the expediency of not allowing her tongue to run on these past matters before Miss Mary Pomeroy. "But, there, where's the good of warning you," concluded Bridget, "when you've got no more sense left than a baby."

With all the laxity in the matter of ghost stories, the indulgence of every foolish whim and wish, accorded to Miss Mary Pomeroy during childhood, one disagreeable remembrance had been sedulously kept from her—the folly wrought by Guy's wife. Not a word had ever been breathed in her ear that could tarnish, or tend to a suspicion to tarnish, her mother's fair fame. Had anyone but a poor imbecile woman, past the age of reason, hinted at it now; Mary would have flown in a passion of indignation. She could not do this with poor Naomi, and the calmness maintained had tended to keep her judgment clear. But something in the very words, in what she undoubtedly knew to be their semi-truth, had startled her; Bridget's manner also startled her; and she rode away with the dismayed conviction lying on her heart that there existed some unhappy secret which had been kept from her.

"Jeffs," she said, speaking as she often did on impulse, checking her horse for the old man to ride up, "did you know the particulars of that—that trouble—years ago—between papa and mamma, and my uncle Rupert?"

"Woe's me, I did, Miss Mary. It was known to all the world, worse luck."

"What was it about? What *was* it?"

"Eh?" cried the old coachman, his caution coming back to him—for her calm address, and its matter-of-fact tone had thrown him off his guard. "I can't tell you about that, Miss Mary."

"Nonsense. How dare you say you can't tell me anything, old Jeffs?"

Jeffs shook his old head. "There be some things we dare not speak of even at your bidding, Miss Mary, and that's one on 'em. If I was capable of talking to you of that, I should expect the late

lord, your good father, to come back out of his grave and haunt me for it—just as we'd used to fancy he came out of it to haunt us while he was alive."

Jeffs backed his horse, as much as to intimate that the colloquy had better cease, and rode soberly home after his young mistress, quite unconscious that his words had but strengthened her impression that some dark secret had been kept concealed from her. Just as oil, poured upon a raging fire, only serves to feed the flame.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ANNALINE.

A SOMEWHAT unpleasant atmosphere was setting in at Pomeroy. It had its rise in the residence there of Annaline Hetley.

That the young Lord of Pomeroy did favour this demoiselle in rather a remarkable degree was evident to all, more especially evident to the jealous observation of Mary. *She* had always been first and foremost with Rupert: she expected to be so still: and to find him dividing his attentions between her and that other pretty girl close at hand, mortified her haughty heart to the last degree. It was wrong in every way, she deemed; she, the future Lady of Pomeroy, ought not to be subjected to a rival near the throne, although that rival might be regarded by Rupert as but a pastime at best.

Mrs. Pomeroy's eyes were also open to the undesirableness of this. What if it should imperil the tempting prospect, which she had looked to as a thing assured?—the marriage of her daughter with Rupert. Once let Rupert get enthralled by the charms of this young girl, and trouble might ensue. Mrs. Pomeroy did not forget that since Rupert had arrived at years of discretion, he had never once given the slightest indication that he meant to carry out the childish talk of former days, and make Mary his wife. Mary, in her straightforwardness, alluded to it without scruple. "When I am the Lady of Pomeroy, this shall be done; I shall not allow that," she would say in the hearing of the servants. But Rupert himself had never confirmed this view by so much as a word. And to Mary, at any rate, the fear that it could or would be imperilled, had not yet presented itself; the feeling, stirring her heart, was only that natural and general dislike which one young girl has to see another usurp those favours which she has looked upon as exclusively hers.

Another, who had maintained silence as to this future prospect, was the Lady of Pomeroy. It could not be but that now and again *some* allusion should have been made to it in her presence; a random word dropped by Mary, or (perhaps a more designed one) by her mother. The lady had never responded to it. Sybilla was one of those sensible and good women who are content to leave these weighty matters in the hands of God. If these two young people chose each

other, she would give them her hearty consent and blessing : but she would not do anything to forward the scheme ; and she most certainly did not and would not prematurely encourage the hopes that were continually built upon it by Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter. This they could not fail to see and understand. The decision would lie with Rupert, and with him alone. But Mary never glanced at the possibility that he would reject her.

She had grown up to the notion that she was to be the Lady of Pomeroy ; she, as the daughter of Guy, the deposed lord, looked upon it as a kind of right that she should be, and she cherished the prospect as a certainty. Mary would not have *schemed* for it ; her nature was too honourable for that ; and when she went to her mother and told her that she would not have Annaline Hetley in the abbey any longer, she was not prompted by any ulterior fear, but simply by the dislike she had taken to her. Thereupon, Mrs. Pomeroy, nothing loth, had intimated to that young lady that she was at liberty to leave.

Annaline Hetley sat in her bedroom, whose window looked on to a pleasant prospect ; for, in this north wing, the sleeping chambers did not all face the quadrangle. The beautiful and extensive gardens lay underneath ; up the coast rose the rocks, with the sea shimmering beyond them.

At last ! A whole week had elapsed since Annaline had anxiously looked for a letter, and here it was at last. Upon Mrs. Pomeroy's telling her, civilly and courteously, that they found the scheme of having a companion for Mary did not answer, and that she would be obliged by her quitting the abbey as soon as convenient, Annaline had written to the only refuge she knew of in England—Lady Essington's house in Berkeley Square. It was from thence she had come ; it was, she supposed, to that she must return, however much against the grain it would be to do so. She wrote a very proper letter to the countess, saying she was not required at Pomeroy, and humbly asking to be allowed to return there for a very short time, until she could hear of somewhere else to go.

For six days Lady Essington did not answer. On the seventh, this letter had come. It was written by Geraldine, and was not a favourable one. They declined to receive Annaline back again.

"We have no *room* for you," wrote Geraldine ; "we have *visitors*. Joan Pomeroy took you (rather *arbitrarily* and *abruptly* we thought) out of our hands, and to Joan Pomeroy you must look in your present dilemma. Some friends started for the Continent last week ; they would have taken charge of you to Florence : that opportunity *has been lost*, and we do not expect to hear of another. My mother bids me tell you that you are *much better* out of London just now than in it, on account of this wretched epidemic that is prevailing : people *coming fresh* amidst it always catch it : it is not sure but we shall run

away *ourselves*. I must add that we think it *very* strange you should have received this *summary* dismissal from Mrs. Pomeroy, and feel sure there must be a *cause* for it. We hope you are not attempting to pursue the young Lord of Pomeroy as you did my brother."

With a swelling of the heart, than which nothing could be more painful; with trembling hands that scarcely held the letter, Annaline gazed at the concluding lines and the innuendos they contained. That she should be deemed capable of "pursuing" the Earl of Essington or the young Lord of Pomeroy seemed to her more cruel than death; bitterly cruel to be told of it. For once in her gentle life, she went into a passion and tore the letter to fragments.

In point of fact, far from "pursuing" the Lord of Pomeroy, Annaline did all she could to keep out of his way, just as she had tried to keep out of Lord Essington's—but not from the same motive. After Mary's attack upon her the morning subsequent to Rupert's arrival, she, one of the most modest and right-minded girls in existence, would not be likely to offend on that score.

"But what is to be done?" she presently asked herself, recurring to the more practical part of Lady Geraldine's letter.—"And how wrong it was of me to give way to temper! If I cannot go there, where am I to go?"

"Where indeed? Joan Pomeroy was not at hand to be appealed to, even had Annaline liked to appeal to her: which she did not. Joan was little more than a stranger, and Joan was at a distance, paying visits. The Essingtons were the only friends she possessed in England. She could not start for Florence alone; and, if she could, she did not possess any money for the journey. Lady Essington had given her a sovereign to put into her pocket when she came to Pomeroy—and part of that she had spent in ribbons and gloves one day at Owlstone.

What was she to do? What could she say to Mrs. Pomeroy, who knew of her application to the Essingtons? Oh, what a sad thing it was to be poor—what embarrassments it brought in its wake.

A tap at her room door, and Mrs. Pomeroy came gliding in. She was a sad-looking woman now, though her face retained a good deal of its former beauty; and she wore sombre robes of black silk, and close bonnets. Ah, what a contrast!—between her, as she was now, and the gay young girl who had been Guy's wife. Mrs. Pomeroy might have sown tares for herself, but she had surely reaped their poison in its utmost bitterness. Annaline rose to present a chair as Mrs. Pomeroy advanced.

"You have read the letter I sent you in, Miss Hetley?" she began in her subdued voice. "I recognised Lady Geraldine's crabbed handwriting. I have often seen it when Lady Anna lived here. Does she appoint a day for your departure?"

What a question it was for the sensitive, humble-minded girl to have to answer! Her colour came and went; her fingers intertwined

themselves painfully one with another. Mrs. Pomeroy, looking fixedly at her in her apathetical way, wondered at the agitation.

"I don't know what to do," began Annaline, her voice low with its emotion. "Geraldine says—says they have visitors and cannot make room for me. I am so sorry."

"Is there nowhere else you can go? To no other friends?"

"I do not know of anywhere. The Essingtons are all the friends I have in England. I wish I could relieve you of myself—I wish I knew what I could do!"

What with pain, uncertainty, and distress, she burst into tears. Mrs. Pomeroy saw the dilemma she was in—that is, that she herself was in, in having at present to keep this waif. She rapidly ran the untoward perplexity over in her mind, and decided that it might have been worse.

Most certainly it might have been worse. For she had just learnt that the young Lord of Pomeroy was about to quit the abbey that morning upon an indefinite visit as to time. Annaline could not do so much harm during his absence.

"Don't cry," she said, kindly enough. "It cannot be helped. Visitors, have they?—well, I suppose the visitors will not remain long, and then you can go up. Would you mind my seeing what Lady Geraldine says?"

"I tore up her letter," avowed Annaline, glancing at the fragments in the grate. And if ever she could feel thankful for having gone into a passion, she felt so then. What would Mrs. Pomeroy have said—have thought—had she read that letter?

"Why should you have torn it up?"

"It did not require an answer," faltered Annaline, at a loss what else to say: and her tears deepened into sobs. "I wish I was nearer Florence. If I could but get to mamma! I am so very sorry that I have nowhere to go to, Mrs. Pomeroy."

"You must stay with us a little longer. It is of no consequence. I am sorry for your own sake that you should have had the trouble of coming so far, the fatigue of the long journeys. One can never tell whether fresh ideas will answer: and Mary was so very lonely without a companion. It is different now the lord has come home."

"Of course; I understand that," assented Annaline. "I am only grieved and annoyed at being any trouble to you."

"You had better get your things on, and I will take you for a drive," said Mrs. Pomeroy, feeling rather sorry for her. "I shall call at my mother's and then drive out for a few miles. The air will revive you. It is a brilliant morning."

"Thank you," responded Annaline, her heart warming to the kindness. "You are very good!"

(To be concluded.)

JOHN KEATS.

WE have stood by a solid rock and heard it, when struck, send forth a soft, bell-like sound. We have sat in a carriage on a steep Italian hillside, and seen two strong grey oxen forget the placid laziness of their nature and pull with a will in front of the horses. We have read a story, purporting to be a true one, of a deaf and dumb man being a band-master. But yet more wonderful than the phenomenon of the vocal rock, or of the active oxen, or of the musical deaf man, is that of a poet born in the house of a livery-stable keeper. John Keats's grandfather followed that profession in Moorfields, and it was under his roof, in October, 1795, that the author of "Endymion" first saw the light.

Keats's earliest years were spent in this same house, so that the surroundings of his childhood were not by any means suggestive of his future calling. No scent of honeysuckle or sweet-briar breathed around his cradle, but the odour of stale tobacco and of well curry-combed horses. His earliest footsteps did not tread grassy meadows, gemmed with cowslips or daisies, but the uneven stones of a court-yard, honeycombed by brown pebbles. His youthful slumbers were not hushed by the notes of the blackbird or the nightingale, but by free ditties trolled by idle stable boys. No legend of goblin or fairy echoed in his nursery, but stories about the miraculous performances of weight-carrying hunters, of fast trotters, and of racing favourites.

It is impossible to say how far the atmosphere that surrounded him influenced the little fellow's thoughts and feelings; it is certain that he was as far from being a milksop as any boy could be. It may be that the livery-stable helped to develop in him something of that manly courage that was always so marked a quality in his character, and that it partly kept under the delicate sensitiveness of his nature; and if so, it did him good service. Had it not been for the steadfast bravery which upheld him in all the trials of his short troubled life, his finely strung body and mind must have given way yet earlier than they did.

The livery-stable soon deprived little John Keats of one of his parents. His father rode out one day on a restive horse, was thrown, and died from the effects of the fall. This was before Keats was ten years old.

His mother, to whose exclusive care the boy was now left, seems to have been a woman who was made up of contrasts. Sometimes she would throw herself into the deepest whirlpool of amusement which the London of that day offered to those in her rank of life; sometimes she would walk through the world with the air of a rigid

Puritan. Now she would flirt, and now she would sit at home weeping over her widowhood and reading sermons. By turns, she would rejoice over her well-furnished wardrobe, and mourn over her ill-furnished mind.

So scanty are the notices we possess of Keats's childhood that we do not know how his mother's character worked upon his own; but we think we can trace a certain family likeness between her complex nature and that mixture of strength and weakness which was visible in the young poet.

From ten to fifteen Keats went to a school kept by a Mr. Clarke, at Enfield. There he made a friendship, which was to be life-long, with his master's son, Cowden Clarke, whose name was afterwards tolerably well known in the literature of his day.

At school Keats acquired a good deal of universal learning and some knowledge of Latin; but he never understood Greek, which is singular, considering how strongly the spirit of ancient Greece lives in much of his poetry. It is a curious instance of a peculiar tone of thought and feeling coming innately into a man without education, or as far as we know, inherited proclivities, having anything to do with it.

Keats's school career was not distinguished by any especial intellectual success. These boyish years were chiefly remarkable for a fiery readiness to resent any insult against himself or injustice done to another; for a love of beauty which shone in his expressive eyes as he lay idly under the trees watching spring deck herself in her glorious mantle, or gazing into the laughing face of summer; for a silent worship of woman, which showed itself in the deepening flush of his cheek and the tremor in his frame whenever, adorned with any unusual charm, she crossed his path.

In looking at Keats's youth, we must not forget one influence which wrought upon him in common with most thoughtful minds of his day: this was the French Revolution. When he was born the blood on the guillotine was hardly dry; when he was a boy the great throb, which the upheaving of France against tyranny had wakened in the heart of every nation, had not ceased to vibrate. All natures of any elevation and purity shrank with horror from the excesses of the Revolution, and from its perversion of laws, human and divine; but nevertheless, its spirit still breathed upon young active minds throughout Europe, working for good in a burning hatred against oppression, working for evil in a tendency to doubt and scepticism.

Naturally enough a youth, such as was Keats, did not escape this foremost influence of his time; and his character and all his writings were coloured by it. Though in early boyhood Keats did not burst into song, poetry was not the less sleeping in his nature, only waiting for a touch to arouse it. That touch came when he read Spenser for the first time. Contact with the genius of a poet of the sixteenth

century awoke the genius of a poet of the nineteenth. Then he wrote his first words in verse, under the title of "Imitation of Spenser."

The fountain thus unsealed soon began to flow freely, and before long he published a little volume of poems. The book was, however, quietly overlooked by the critics and not much attended to by the general public.

The next great intellectual revelation that the mind of Keats received was when, through a translation, he made acquaintance with Homer. He would sit up all night poring over the beloved pages, and his friends who happened to be sleeping near him would often be aroused by his cries of delight, which were like those of a man who has found a rich treasure.

His mother died before Keats quitted school, and thus he was left very much to rule himself. It was a dangerous inheritance for one of his temperament; and we almost wonder that he did not make worse use of it than he did. Soon after he left Mr. Clarke's school Keats became a medical student. He quickly made considerable progress in his profession, as a youth of his mental power was sure to do if he gave himself to his work in earnest; but before long he began to feel that a doctor was not what he was meant to be in life. He came out of the anatomical lecture-room with every sensitive nerve quivering with disgust. Abstruse medical books were, he found, not at all the sort of reading that suited him. He grew sick over the diagnosis of a painful disease. When he came to walk the hospitals he performed operations with some skill, it is true, but all the while he was shrinking and trembling as much as the patient.

After a time he felt that he could not go on with this distasteful work any longer; so he gave up medicine and resolved to be nothing but a literary man. It was a foolish step as far as worldly prosperity went. Almost all his small fortune had been spent in his medical education, and at present he was not the least known as an author. Keats, however, felt as if a weight had been rolled off his shoulders.

He now made his way into a literary set, who, in our opinion, did not do much good either to his style as a writer or his character as a man. It was a constellation that he was in the midst of, it is true, but some of the stars were wandering stars, and some of them were falling ones. Let us pause for a moment and look at Keats's new friends.

There is the man who holds such broad views, but who, nevertheless, lives in a groove of his own peculiar opinions; the man who would look into the depths of everything, but who has lost the key to life's mysteries, the key which the village child that reads his Bible holds in his hand; the man who would reform society, but has lost the simple art of making a home; the man whose name is Godwin.

Then there is one who plays with everything; he plays with duty,

he plays with life, he plays with love, he plays with friendship, and yet he does it all in such an airy, graceful way that we can hardly be angry with him. With all his faults, with all his errors, we feel that there is a heart in Leigh Hunt.

There is one who is stern and uncompromising, and sometimes even harsh, but who nevertheless is living up to his own standard according to his own light, and his name is Hazlitt. There is one who is beautiful, misled, misleading, a god in his genius—the frailest of mortals in his life; one whom we cannot praise, and yet whom we shrink with tears from blaming, and his name is Shelley.

Most of the faults in Keats's style come from a too close study of Leigh Hunt's writings. Keats was an immeasurably greater genius than his friend, but as young authors, even of the highest class, often do, he imitated in a certain degree a writer that he admired. We believe, also, that Keats contracted a certain vagueness in his religious opinions from his intimacy with Leigh Hunt and those who frequented his society.

Notwithstanding, however, the dangers of these new friendships (dangers which probably he himself was not aware of), this was the happiest part of Keats's short life. He was in daily intercourse with men whose high intellectual powers made them most congenial companions for him, and his mind was full of bright, young ambition, which as yet had known no check. We will try to take his photograph at this period, for we shall, alas! never see him to as much advantage again.

Chestnut curls cluster round a brow which rises up like a very temple of mind. The blue eyes are changeful, now soft, now fiery. The nose is well shaped. The lower part of the face does not correspond to the beauty of the upper; it is narrow, and the lips are too full. Still, in spite of this defect, it is a face that attracts and interests us, a face that has uncommon characters engraved upon it, a face that somehow clings to the memory. His figure is tall and well-proportioned, and his broad chest and strong shoulders suggest not the faintest idea of pulmonary disease.

He has a hatred of injustice and tyranny that prompts him, as he walks along, to stop and take the part of every little misused street boy. He has a passionate love for beauty, which makes his face as he passes through the country on a bright day seem a mirror of the fair world round him; which draws from him the words, "Never have I known such true delight as in watching the growth of flowers." He has an animal enjoyment of life which makes every hour of health and sunshine a festival for him. He has a soul in which dwells a warm longing for love and fame. Such was the dawn of Keats.

One day Shelley and Keats grew warm over a discussion on poetry. The end of it was that they agreed each to write a poem and to try which could finish first. In order that he might dedicate himself exclusively to his work, Keats retired to the Isle of Wight, and there,

with soft airs breathing round him, amid the scent of flowers and the song of birds, he wrote his "Endymion."

Keats completed his work in a rough form in six months. It was, however, much longer than that before he gave it to the world. He lingered over the offspring of his fancy with the anxious fondness of true genius, deepening the colouring here and softening it there.

At length "Endymion" was published. It was too marked a work to be passed over by the reviewers as his first little volume had been. Unless it had fallen into the kindly hands of some delicate discerning critic, who would have pointed out to the young author the faults which were scattered so abundantly among the real beauties of the poem, it was a book which was sure to excite either excessive praise or excessive censure. This latter was its fate.

Gifford, a Quarterly Reviewer, a man with about as much poetry in him as a steam-engine, finding that he could not understand Keats's genius, thought that the best thing he could do for his own dignity, and indeed for the world in general, was to laugh at and cut to pieces "Endymion." The lesser reviews echoed the bray of the great quarterly donkey, and the press spoke hardly a good word for Keats's poem. They could not, however, kill what was immortal; "Endymion" found even then many sympathetic readers, and since that time it has found thousands upon thousands more.

We have no space to enter into a discussion on the merits and demerits of "Endymion." We may, however, briefly say that in our eyes its chief failing is that it has too much of the body and too little of the soul.

Notwithstanding all that many writers have said to the contrary, we believe that Keats was not in the least crushed by the fierce attack of the critics. He had an instinctive consciousness of his own power too strong and a courage too energetic for that; there was in his poetry too much of the free music of the lark, who sings for no listeners, but because of the overflow of melody which is in him. No; disappointment of this sort had nothing to do with the rapid decay of Keats's health.

One of Keats's greatest friends was a Mr. Armitage Brown. He was a man of some talent, and so close was Keats's intimacy with him that they wrote a play together, sitting at the same table, Brown supplying the plot and arranging the scenes, and Keats putting it all into language. This play never reached the stage, but not the less for that should we have liked to have been in Armitage Brown's place in those days of joint composition, and to have watched the sunshine of inspiration dawn on the young poet's face.

Armitage Brown was the indirect means of bringing Keats to the great consuming sorrow of his life. At Brown's house at Hampstead he met a lady who at once threw a spell over his heart and soul. She was a relation of Brown's, and was domesticated in his family on account of some disagreement with her own nearer kindred. Thus

his constant visits to his friend brought the poet into frequent contact with her.

"She has the beauty of a young leopardess"—such was Keats's description of this lady in a letter to a friend. The words give us a good idea of the sort of charm which must have formed her attraction for him. There must have been a free, wild grace about her; an absence in her of all affectation and false display; there must have reigned in her manner and bearing a contempt of hollow outward forms. We can well imagine that she had the kind of fascination which would have made its way into John Keats's heart.

Keats's passion quickly began to assume gigantic proportions. The love of this young poet was not like most men's love. It was a flinging of his whole being into one feeling, a twining of every fibre of his heart round one centre; it was to look at each object through the one all-absorbing affection. He moved, he breathed, he slept, he dreamt, he woke, in his love.

Before long Keats declared his attachment, but obstacles rose up between him and his happiness. He was without almost any assured income. Literature was at present proving no gold-mine for him. He had given up medicine, the only profession he had ever studied thoroughly. No walk of life seemed readily to open itself to him. His beloved's relations gave an ungracious consent to the pair being, if they chose it, engaged; but they refused to allow any thought of a marriage until Keats's worldly prospects were changed.

It is difficult to make out what was the real attitude of the leopardess at this conjuncture. She certainly liked the poet's homage, and returned sufficiently his feelings to allow him to take the place of her accepted lover; but she appears to have cared very little for their marriage being put off for an indefinite period. We fancy there must have been something of the cat as well as the leopardess in her nature, and that she must have purred, and caressed, and received softly much stroking and fondling without being capable of any very deep devotion.

From this time forward Keats's life was one dreary stretch of unfulfilled longing. He had no taste for any work except literary work; his whole being shrank from the drudgery which is inseparably attendant on the beginning of every profession; and yet his entire earthly happiness centred round one point, which was a home with the woman he loved as its queen. But how was such a home to be founded without money?

But it will be asked, Had not Keats any gentler and more placid love for his own close kindred which might have at least soothed him in this season of great trial. He was far from being without family affection. It was a heavy blow for him when his brother passed away before him. When a nephew was born to him his joy showed itself in a pretty little burst of song. When he was dying he pressed a letter from his sister Madame Lanos to his lips and to his heart.

But no love of brother or sister could make up for the unsatisfied love of her whom he had made the star of his life.

In order that he might devote himself more exclusively to work, Keats left Hampstead, where he had been lately living that he might daily see his beloved, and established himself in a lodging in the middle of London. It was a dreary home for the young poet. No whisper of wood and stream soothed his ear, no breeze bringing sweets from the hay-field or garden caressed his cheek; his eye was refreshed by no dance of green leaves in the sunlight. Yet here, with the roar of the great city round him, amid the rattle of hackney coaches, and the tramp of feet, and the discord of street cries, his genius soared higher than it had yet done, for he now wrote "*Isabella and the Pot of Basil*," and "*The Eve of St. Agnes*." These two short stories in verse are far above any part of "*Endymion*;" for simple pathos and for exquisite tenderness and grace they have few equals among poems of their kind in any language.

"*The Pot of Basil*" and "*The Eve of St. Agnes*" were published with several other short poems. This time both critics and public gave Keats a friendly reception. He was universally acknowledged among the poets of the day; still even this volume only brought him small money remuneration.

Keats did not stay long in his London lodging. It was not that he sighed for green fields or the song of the nightingale, or for sunshine unadulterated by smoke, but for the eyes and voice and touch of his love. Even a few miles was for him too great a separation from her. There was life for him nowhere except in the very air she breathed; so he again settled at Hampstead, close to Armitage Brown's house. Keats's health now began to show signs of giving way. He had never been very strong, and anxiety about his unattainable marriage fretted both body and mind like the perpetual wearing of a chain.

We hope that Keats's promised wife gave her whole heart and soul at this time to the work of soothing and strengthening him—we hope, but we are not sure; for we cannot help doubting her having been quite worthy of all the worship the poet gave her. It was a proud task for any woman to be Keats's helper and comforter, to touch with a delicate hand the sensitive chords of his nature, to do the highest and purest work of her sex by leading him to an Almighty love on which his noble spirit might have leant securely; but we do not believe that the poet's chosen love fully understood the value of the lot which had fallen to her, that she ever exercised the sweet and lofty rights which were hers.

One day when Keats was returning from a short absence from home, he took an outside place on an evening coach for Hampstead. It was a bitterly cold night. The east wind came bounding over the hedges like a cruel giant. The moon looked like a ball of frozen crystal. The church spires came out sharply against the background of the clear, star-sprinkled sky.

The passengers on the top of the coach wrapped their great-coats closer round them. The ladies inside drew up the windows. A cloud of steam rose from the horses. Hoofs and wheels rang merrily on the hard ground. The guard's horn echoed through the crisp air, waking up the drowsy little country places, where but a few lights still twinkled.

Little did Keats heed the chill breeze. There was warmth and brightness enough in his heart for a summer noontide, for he was going back to her who was his sunlight.

This journey was, however, the beginning of the end for the young poet. That night he rose from his bed to bring up a considerable quantity of blood. He lit a candle with a nervous quickness, probably increased by old medical experience. His knowledge as a doctor at once told him that it was arterial blood, and he exclaimed, "In this blood my death-warrant is written out."

Care, however—and he did give himself the most anxious care, for he clung passionately to life for the sake of his love—restored him for a while. This touch of the finger of death made him more eager than ever to reach his long-delayed marriage; for, if he was to die, he wanted first to enjoy a year or two of household happiness.

He began vigorously to form new plans for gaining a settled income. He would find employment in some foreign land, he would resolutely enter once more the medical profession. Notwithstanding the sensitive horror with which he shrank from the more painful part of a doctor's work, his energetic courage—of which, in common with most great men, he possessed, as has before been said, a considerable share—would have doubtless enabled him to carry out this latter plan, had it not been that the hand of disease was again laid heavily upon him.

All the symptoms of consumption now began to declare themselves in his constitution. There was but one hope, to seek a warmer climate. To leave England was for him like tearing the branch from the tree, for to leave England was to leave her; but still he went. Severn, the painter, one of his closest and dearest friends, accompanied him, and watched over him with all a brother's love, and the two travelled to Rome. It was too late for southern breezes and sunshine to bring even any alleviation to the disease; every day it made more rapid advances. Keats first struggled passionately against his early fate, and then grew resigned.

Why was not the woman he loved at his side to soften his last sufferings, to whisper in his ear words about a higher love? A journey to Rome was no doubt in those days a very different matter from what it is now; but still, at such a moment, nothing should have kept a woman from her promised husband. Had she been there, there would have been less sadness in that grave in which, before his twenty-sixth year on earth was completed, they laid in the eternal city the body of John Keats.

ALICE KING.

SHADOWED FORTH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT."

I.

IT was a very foolish compact to make, but both Osric and I were at an age when foolish things are often done. Neither of us was turned twenty-one. We were, in fact, nothing more than a couple of boys, however much we might choose to fancy ourselves men of the world. My career in life was already decided upon. I had elected to become an artist and earn my bread by means of my brush and palette. I attended the Life School assiduously, and had already exhibited at one or two of the minor galleries. I had a couple of rooms on a third floor in Bloomsbury, and my particular chum, Osric Imray, had the two immediately below mine. It was not a part of the town that his own tastes would have led him to live in. He had simply pitched his tent in that particular spot in order that he might be near me, although I was nothing but a poor painter, while he was the son of a rich banker, and, in all probability, would one day be a rich banker himself.

But that was a point on which Osric as yet could not make up his mind. He hated the name of banker, and at present was coquetting with the law, as he had already coquetted with literature and the arts generally, only to discover, after a greater or lesser loss of time and labour, that he had no real vocation for any of them. His father, wise in his generation, did no more than urge him gently, as one might coax an obstinate but high-spirited horse towards the path he would have him follow. Mr. Imray, senior, probably judged that when Osric should have had "his fling," and, after having tried half-a-dozen things, have thrown each of them up in turn, he would settle quietly down into the groove arranged for him by parental foresight. And the result proved the accuracy of his calculations.

Meanwhile Osric had plenty of pocket money and very little to do, his legal studies being hardly more than a pleasant fiction, at which he was as ready to laugh as heartily as any one. Our evenings were nearly always spent either in his rooms or mine, and many were the wordy arguments, permeated through and through with tobacco smoke, in which we indulged on such occasions. On one particular winter evening, after befogging ourselves for a couple of hours with some of the super-subtleties of German metaphysics, our talk wandered away into another channel, and fell upon ghosts, apparitions, cases of second sight, and such like gruesome matters, till at length we so worked ourselves up that a louder rattle of wind in the

chimney than ordinary made both of us start in our seats and stare at each other with frightened eyes.

It was on this evening that the compact which I have already designated as a foolish one, was made between Osric and myself. We agreed that whichever of us died first should (if it were so permitted by the Unseen Power that rules the destinies of men) appear to the survivor and warn him of the event that had taken place. We were very much in earnest in the matter, and as a proof of our determination to carry out the agreement—if permitted to do so—we then and there made an exchange of rings. I think we were both a little bit ashamed of our folly next morning, and the topic was hardly ever alluded to again between us. But when, some four months later, Osric and I shook hands and said good-bye, knowing well that we should not see each other for a long time to come, his last words to me were, "You have not forgotten our compact?" and mine an assurance that there was no likelihood of my doing so. Osric was called to Scotland by the failing health of his father, and a week afterwards I started for Italy, and did not again set foot in England for a couple of years.

Ten years came and went, during which I only saw Osric some dozen times in all, and that was when he came to London on business. He had long ago settled down into a steady, plodding banker, and was all that his father could desire him to be. Sometimes when he came south I was in Cumberland or Wales, and at other times he had not even an hour to spare, so that our meetings were necessarily infrequent. But with the grip of each other's hand the old spirit of good fellowship came back on the instant—we were nineteen again, with the world all before us, and for the time being the years that had parted us seemed to have no more substance than a dream.

October was here—October in Lakeland, bringing with it a change of weather that sent such brethren of the brush as, like late swallows, still lingered, flying southward as fast as steam could lend them wings. I, too, was one of the fugitives, but I took my flight by easy stages, stopping for a night wherever whim or fancy dictated, and then forward again next morning. On a certain chill afternoon I found myself at a quaint old hostelry on the banks of the Dove. I was charmed with the appearance of the place, and decided to take up my quarters in it for the night. Supper, and then to bed, at the early hour of ten, pleasantly tired, but not so much so as to cause me to omit my favourite habit of reading myself to sleep. I put the candle on a little table close to the head of my bed, but well out of the way of the curtains. After half an hour with my well-loved Elia I dropped quietly off, leaving the candle—a long one—still burning, a practice I generally adopt when sleeping in strange places. After sleeping for some time I awoke suddenly and completely, with a vivid sense upon me of not being alone in the room. I opened my eyes and stared round, but without lifting my head from the pillow. Sometimes on waking up

in a strange room it has taken me a moment or two to recollect where I was, but in this case I recognized the room and its furniture in an instant. The candle had burnt low and was beginning to gutter. A quarter of an hour more and I should be left in darkness. All was silent, with a death-like, oppressive silence such as one never experiences save in lonely country places, such as the town knows nothing of. Not a breath of wind to stir the branches outside, not the timid scratching of a mouse behind the wainscot, not even the faint friendly thud of far-off hoofs on the frosty high road. Nature, animate and inanimate, might have been struck with eternal death, and I the last man left alive in a world of shadows. I shivered involuntarily, and drew the bedclothes more closely about me.

As I have already said, there was a vivid sense upon me at the moment of waking of not being alone in the room. I had a feeling as if some one had been bending over me and breathing lightly on my forehead. I could feel the terror that shone out of my eyes in that first waking stare round the room, while my glance travelled from the clothes cupboard on one side, with the chair still in front of it that I had put there, to the locked door on the other side.

But when nothing met my view save the commonplace room and its commonplace furniture—as like a hundred other inn rooms I had slept in at various times as one pea is like another—and when with a quick swish I had dashed back the curtains at the head of the bed and had satisfied myself that no one was hidden behind them—the terror that had gripped my heart but a moment before began to loosen its hold. Another minute, and I dropped back with a rebound into the world of work-a-day realities, in which such things as ghostly fancies and midnight tremors are either unknown, or known only to be ridiculed. With a shrug and a yawn I nestled down amongst my pillows, and made a mental memorandum never to eat potted trout for supper again. A minute or two later the death-like silence was broken by the faint chiming of some far-away clock. I put forth a lazy hand, found my watch under the pillow, and drew it out to ascertain the time. It was exactly half-past one. I was putting my watch back and was congratulating myself that I had still seven cozy hours of bed before me, when my wandering glance was caught and fixed by a strange and sinister-looking shadow on the ceiling of my room.

I stared at it with wide-open eyes; and, as I stared, so vivid and realistic did it look, my heart for a moment or two seemed to stand still in dread expectancy, and I felt as if I were about to witness the consummation of some dire tragedy, which I was powerless to hinder or avert. But the shadow moved not for all my staring, and as before I had jeered at myself for allowing the foolish fancies that waylaid me at the moment of waking to have any effect upon me, so now I was not long in perceiving that what at the first glance had so startled me, could be, and was, nothing more than the shadow of a portion of the

furniture of the bed, projected by the light of the candle on to the ceiling, but distorted in the act, as shadows often are distorted, beyond ordinary recognition. But although I was perfectly satisfied in my own mind as to the cause of the shadow, I was none the less impressed by the singularity of the effect thus obtained. What I saw was the representation of a man, cloaked and wearing a slouched hat—of a man with a remarkably hooked and parrot-like nose—in the act of stooping over some one or something unseen, and striking down at the same moment with a knife or short dagger. Although nothing but a shadow, it seemed instinct with a sinister and murderous purpose. Life seemed to breathe from its every curve. You almost felt as if you could see the victim. An instant more and that dagger would descend.

I stretched forth my hand and moved the candlestick a couple of inches further to the right. At once the effect was gone. The shadow was still there, but it was a shadow without meaning or purpose. The slouched hat was gone, the hooked nose was gone, the dagger was gone. Then I moved the candlestick a few inches to the left, the result being the production of another unmeaning shadow like nothing I had ever seen before. Then I replaced the candlestick as nearly as I could judge on the spot where it had first stood. I wanted to reproduce the first shadow, but the result was something altogether different. Slightly piqued at my ill-success, I moved the candlestick here and there, constantly varying the shape of the shadow, but never for a moment obtaining more than the slightest resemblance to the one that had so strangely startled me. It was unaccountable. Then, all at once, the candle flared out for a moment—the next, darkness swallowed me up.

As a rule the impressions which print themselves on our mental tablets during the dark hours, however vivid they may seem at the time, look but dim and faded reproductions of themselves in the clear light of morning. So it was in the present case. The recollection of my midnight fancies served as food for a smile over breakfast; then more serious matters claimed me, and I put them aside as so many other trifles are put aside, to be remembered, perchance, at some odd moment now and then, or, perchance, forgotten for ever.

Two days later I found myself in London, where some terrible news awaited me. My dear friend, Osric Imray, had been murdered—murdered and robbed while travelling by railway. It appeared that he had been from home, transacting certain business connected with the bank, and was on his return journey, having in his possession a large sum in notes and drafts, when he met his sad fate. He had bribed the guard to lock the door of his compartment and so keep other passengers out, but at a certain station he was found stabbed to the heart. The bag that had contained his property was missing, and the carriage door was unlocked. Purse, watch, jewellery—all were gone. It was evident that the murderer, whoever he

might be, must have quitted his own compartment while the train was en route, have obtained access to Imray's compartment, probably while the latter was asleep, and having accomplished his dreadful purpose, have gone back along the foot-boards of the carriages to his own seat. A daring deed to do, without a doubt, but certainly not an impossibility. At the next station the murderer had doubtless left the train like any ordinary passenger, and had mingled with, and been lost among the crowd before the discovery of his crime. So effectually had he taken his precautions that all efforts to trace him proved utterly unavailing. Gradually, as time went on, the excitement of the public wore itself out, and the attention of the police became absorbed in other and more immediate duties.

To all appearance, Imray's murder was destined to add one more to the long list of undiscovered crimes. I mourned my friend long and sincerely. If any recollection of the foolish compact we had entered into as young men ever came into my memory, it was speedily dismissed as something unworthy of serious thought. But it certainly did strike me as a singular coincidence that the murder took place on the very morning and, as nearly as could be calculated, at the very hour that I had been startled by that strange shadow on the ceiling of my bedroom. It struck me as a singular coincidence, but as nothing more.

Some six or seven months had passed away, when a commission to paint a certain picture necessitated my taking a journey from London to a place some distance north of Aberdeen. I left home early one morning hoping to reach my journey's end sometime in the course of the forenoon of the following day. In order to do this it was necessary that I should travel all night. About ten o'clock, being alone in my compartment and thoroughly tired out, I dropped into a refreshing sleep. The train was still dashing along at express speed when I awoke with the sensation of not having been asleep for more than a few minutes. I looked at my watch, and was surprised to find how late it was. Then I rubbed the window and peered out, but the night was moonless and overcast. Not even the vaguest outline could be discerned of the great hills sleeping around, whose sacred silence we seemed so rudely to disturb. I let down the window to obtain a breath of fresh air. A minute later the train shot into a tunnel.

From my seat close to the open window I could see the clear reflection of each lighted compartment on the black damp wall of the tunnel. There, too, was my own shadow, sharply focussed on the wall, as I sat peering forward with the peak of my travelling-cap pulled well over my brows. And there too, as I lived, and emanating from the next compartment, was a second shadow still more sharply defined than mine—the twin shadow of that other shadow I had seen six months before in my inn bedroom! So well did I

remember its every feature—if a shadow can be said to have features—that it was impossible for me to be mistaken. There, as before, was the cloaked and stooping figure, the slouched hat, the parrot-like nose, and there, above all, was the uplifted arm and the hand that clutched a dagger. I seemed to freeze as I looked. Not to have saved my life could I have either stirred or spoken during those few moments. As before, the shadow was motionless, or would have been but for the slight oscillation of the train. The tragedy, if such it were, did not advance—the uplifted dagger did not fall—the unseen victim put forth no arm in self-defence.

Another minute and we were out of the tunnel, and the shadow, focussed no longer on the black enclosing walls, radiated into space and vanished. I was more disturbed in my mind than I would have cared to own. What did the second appearance of this same ominous shadow portend? Was it sent as a warning, or as a clue to the murder: or was it merely one of those singular coincidences, by no means uncommon in everyday life, but which we yet find it impossible satisfactorily to explain? For that night, at least, "Macbeth had murdered sleep."

By-and-by the train slackened speed. We were approaching a station at which we were timed to stop. Before the train had come fairly to a stand my carriage-door was opened and I was on the platform. No one had had time to leave the compartment next to mine; no one did leave it. I tried the door; it was locked: I peered through the windows; the compartment was empty.

I made my way to the guard of the train. "The middle compartment of that carriage is empty and locked," I said; "but there was certainly some one in it as we came through the tunnel just now."

For a moment he looked startled. Then he held up his lamp and looked at the number painted on the door. "M 98," he said, as he read it out. "No, sir; no one was in that carriage as we came through the tunnel. No one has been in it since we left B——. I locked it there myself; and, as you see, it is locked still."

I did not care to tell the man what I had seen, so I merely said that I supposed I must have been mistaken, and left him. Two minutes later, as I was standing at the refreshment bar, he came up to me with a mysteriously confidential air. "About that carriage, sir," he whispered. "I may tell you that there is something uncommon about it, though it would not do to tell everybody so. It's the very carriage in which poor Mr. Imray was murdered. M 98—that's the number. The middle compartment it was that he was found in. I was the guard that was examined at the inquest. You have not forgotten the case, sir?"

Forgotten it? Should I ever forget? I don't know how I answered the man, but he must have seen that his words had moved me. "And now," he went on, "whenever I see M 98 running as part of my train, I always make a point of locking the middle

compartment, and if anybody wants to get into it I tell them it's engaged. It seems to me as if I couldn't bear to see anybody travelling in it, knowing what I know about it."

I slipped a coin into the man's hand. "Have my traps got out of the train," I said; "I shall go no further to-night."

Was there nothing more than a coincidence in all this? I kept asking myself. Had I not been singled out for some mysterious purpose, of which as yet I knew nothing. "It is—it must be, something more than blind chance," I said to myself. The more I turned the matter over in my mind, the more settled became my conviction that there was something more yet to come—that I had but to wait patiently, and in due time the riddle would be read for me—the mystery solved.

But when weeks and months passed away, and nothing further happened: when no sign or token was vouchsafed me, and when time had in some measure blunted the sharp edge of memory: I began to think that I must have been led away by my own nervous fancies; that for once I had allowed my imagination to outstrip my common-sense. Finally, I came to believe that I had never seen the shadow in the tunnel at all, but that the fact of thinking I had seen such a thing was a pretty good proof that my mental equipoise was not quite so finely adjusted as I had fondly imagined it to be. Had I laid the case before my doctor, his verdict would have been that I had overworked myself, and that all I needed was rest and change of scene.

About this time I received a commission to paint a picture illustrative of a certain phase of low-class London life. In my search for types and faces to embody in my picture, I found myself after night-fall on several occasions in some of the lowest neighbourhoods, and among some of the vilest dens, that the metropolis had at that time reason to be ashamed of. I had several acquaintances among the police, and under their sheltering wings I visited sundry places into which it would not have been safe for me to venture alone.

Said one of these acquaintances, Sergeant Smith, to me one night, after we had been the round of several queer places: "There's often a rum lot in here, sir, though mostly foreigners. Suppose we finish up by taking a peep at them." The place he spoke of was a mean and dingy-looking café, situated in a mean and dingy street somewhere in the purlieus of Soho and Leicester Square. We pushed open the swing-door and went in, and at once I could have fancied that I was hundreds of miles from London, and that I had lost myself in some low neighbourhood of the Quartier Latin. But with the place and the people found there I have nothing here to do—or rather, I have to do with one person only. I did not see him when I first went in, nor till after I had sat down and ordered a cup of coffee. But as soon as I did see him, or rather, as soon as I caught sight of the shadow reflected on the wall beyond him, I

started to my feet with an exclamation that turned a dozen suspicious pairs of eyes on me in a moment. On the coarse whitewashed wall of this mean café I beheld, for the third time, the sinister outline which had haunted me twice already—once in my bedroom at the inn on the Dove, and once in the tunnel, as I was travelling in the carriage in which poor Imray had been murdered. Unbidden and unsought by me, for the third time, there it was, as clearly defined as though it were the same shadow outlined in charcoal to the most minute particular that I had seen before.

It was the shadow and not the man that in the first instance drew my eyes to the remote corner of the room which they occupied, apart from anyone, but my gaze now turned involuntarily to the man himself. I was filled with a sort of dread curiosity—a feeling which I could not analyse had possession of me. Who and what manner of man was this that had been so strangely singled out before me from all the other millions of living units scattered over the face of the earth? Was the riddle going to be read for me at last?

He was tall, thin, and bony, as well as could be seen for the long, heavy, old-fashioned cloak, with its fur collar and quaint clasps, in which he was wrapped. He wore a soft felt hat, pulled low down over his brows. He had red hair, and a short, pointed beard and moustache of the same colour. His large, Roman nose made his thin cadaverous face look thinner and more cadaverous than it would otherwise have looked. When my attention was first drawn to him, he had risen to his feet, and was staring intently at the door, through which three or four new comers were filing slowly into the room. He looked as if he were impatiently awaiting the coming of some one.

In one hand he held a roll of French bread, in the other a long, slender pocket-knife. For a moment or two the knife was poised in mid air while he gazed frowningly at the door. Then, when he whom he was expecting did not come, the knife descended, the bread was severed, and he sat down to his chocolate and dry crust with the air of a man who had not tasted food since yesterday. But, mean and commonplace as the man and his surroundings might seem and were, prosaic, as might be and was, the occupation on which he was engaged, I could not but hearken to the dread voice that whispered in my heart: "The man before you is the murderer of Osric Imray!"

II.

"Do you see somebody you know?" asked Sergeant Smith, prompted thereto by the exclamation that broke involuntarily from my lips the moment my eyes caught sight of the shadow on the wall.

"Yes," I said, with a sort of gasp as I resumed my seat. "Somebody that I have been looking for for a long time. You see that man," I added, "in the cloak and slouched hat, sitting by himself in

the top left-hand corner?" The sergeant nodded. "Have you ever seen him before to night?"

"I can't say that I recollect his face," answered Smith cautiously, after a long steady stare.

"And yet it is anything but an ordinary face. Put somebody on to find out all that can be found out about him, and bring your report to me as soon as you are ready."

"It shall be done, sir," was the sergeant's prompt response.

"To what class do the customers of this place mostly belong?" I asked.

"Five-sixths of them are foreigners, as you can see for yourself, sir. A sprinkling of them may be French or Belgian workmen, who have found employment in London. The rest I should put down as being chiefly revolutionists and conspirators of different nationalities who have fled their country, and who contrive to eke out a subsistence here, few save themselves know how: while waiting for a turn of Fortune's wheel that may make them generals or senators, and give them, in their turn, the power of shooting or exiling those who are now at the top of the tree.

"The first thing to be done," continued Sergeant Smith, as soon as we were outside the café, "is to ascertain where our Jewish-looking friend hides his head of a night. Do you, sir, wait here a minute or two while I go and look for one of my fellows. If our friend comes out meanwhile, follow him at a distance."

Away went the sergeant, while I remained on watch near the door of the café. But no one came out, and in five minutes Sergeant Smith was back, accompanied by a policeman in plain clothes. To this man certain instructions were given, after which the sergeant and I went our several ways.

Some eight or nine days passed, when, one evening on returning to my rooms, I found the sergeant waiting for me. What he had to tell me may briefly be related as follows.

The man's name—or rather, the name he was known by—was Pierre Lenoir, but whether he were really a Frenchman, as his name would imply, was doubtful. Smith was inclined to put him down as a Pole or a Hungarian; but the sergeant's knowledge of different nationalities was neither accurate nor extensive. To whatever country the man belonged, he had no ascertainable employment, nor any visible means of subsistence. He lived in one room, the second-floor front of No. 33A, Winckworth Street, Soho. He generally left his lodgings about noon; breakfasted at some café; read the newspapers, English and foreign; smoked innumerable cigarettes; sauntered through the streets for an hour or two, sometimes in company, sometimes alone; visited different compatriots, all of whom, like himself, seemed to live in one room; and so, in the course of the evening, found his way back to one or another café where he spent the hours till midnight, sometimes brooding silently over his own thoughts, sometimes play-

ing dominoes or draughts noisily with his friends. After that, home to his second-floor front, not to be seen over the threshold again till noon the next day. So far as could be ascertained, when at home he associated with nobody and had few or no visitors.

Such was the substance of what Sergeant Smith had to tell me. But now that I had found out so much, what was I to do next? What use could I make of the information thus acquired? I had settled upon no definite plan of action. I only felt that I must do something—or rather, I felt that something was given me to do. As yet the way was dark before me, but that light would come in time I did not doubt. I did not doubt that behind the thrice-seen shadow was a hidden purpose which of a surety would in due time remain hidden no longer.

On the evening of the day following that of the sergeant's visit I found myself in Winckworth Street, Soho. That it had at one time been a street with some pretensions to be considered fashionable was at once apparent, both from the size of the houses and the style in which they were built. But as the tide of society ebbed westward, so had Winckworth Street gradually but surely fallen into decay, till at length the whilom homes of fashion and gentility had come to be nothing more than so many lodging-houses; not as yet lodging-houses of the commonest kind, but year by year imperceptibly tending that way. No. 33A differed in nowise from its neighbours. It had a basement floor below the level of the street, the window of which looked into a tiny railed off space not much bigger than a lady's travelling trunk. Above this was a room with three windows—it had once been the dining-room—with a front door and a rather fine porch, that probably dated from the reign of the First or Second George. Over this was what had originally been the drawing-room, with its four flat-looking windows and small longitudinal panes. Higher still were two more stories of four windows each, and then the roof.

According to Smith, the second-floor front was the room occupied by Lenoir. To this I at once directed my attention. As stated already, it had four windows. At one of these windows a young woman now sat sewing, and yet the sergeant had said that Lenoir lived alone and had no visitors. I paced up and down the street several times, glancing up at the window each time I passed it. All the windows had venetian blinds, but after a time I noticed that the two left-hand windows, at one of which the girl was sitting, had, in addition, short blinds of some common kind of net or muslin, while the two right-hand windows were bare. Then it struck me that the second-floor front was probably divided into two rooms with two windows to each room, Lenoir being the occupant of one of them and the girl who was sewing of the other.

I was still busy working out this idea, when I noticed that a small card was suspended in the dining-room window. I crossed the road to read what was written on it. "Top Back-room to Let, Unfurnished,"

were the words I saw. My heart gave a throb as I read. I walked down the street and up again while I composed myself. Then I knocked. The door was answered by a faded, washed-out old woman, whose face looked all nose and chin. I told her I wanted to look at the room that was to let, and at her request I followed her up stairs. Of course the room suited me. Any room in that house would have suited me. I agreed at once to take it. "I suppose you have several other lodgers in the house?" I asked. "Heaps of 'em," was the answer. Then she told me that the whole of the house was rented by her husband, who, with herself, lived on the basement floor. That the ground floor was let off to a professor of music, and the drawing-room floor to a professor of dancing and his two daughters. On the floor above were "Mounseer Lenoir," a very quiet French gentleman; and, in the adjoining room, a young lady connected with one of the "theatres." Higher still, a young West-end shopman found accommodation, and at the back was the room I had just taken. When I told the old lady that I was an artist by profession, she answered that there were "lots of 'em" about that neighbourhood, but from her tone I gathered that she did not consider them of much account.

Next day I moved a few traps into my domicile, the chief articles being an easel and a camp bedstead, and tried to make myself as comfortable as the circumstances of the case would permit.

As it was far from my intention to spend the whole of my time in Winckworth Street, I still retained my own rooms, visiting them daily, and still looking upon them as my real home.

But between ten o'clock and noon next day I was always at No. 33A, that is to say, during the whole time Lenoir was under the same roof. At the end of a week I had seen him twice. Once I brushed past him on the stairs as I was going down and he coming up; once I encountered him at the corner of the street as I was on my way to the house. On neither occasion did he appear to take more notice of me than if there had been no such person in existence.

In my search for any scraps of information that might prove useful to me, I made it my business to ingratiate myself with my landlady and her husband. The latter was a man between sixty and seventy years old. He had been a soldier at one time, and after that a gentleman's servant, and had travelled much in early life. He was a great smoker, and fond of a "crack" with anyone that would talk to him. So one or two evenings a week I made a point of descending to the basement and smoking a pipe with the old fellow. On these occasions I heard the histories of all his lodgers as far as they were known to him, although it was about one man only that I cared to hear. But of Lenoir he could tell me very little more than I had already been told by Smith. In the eyes of the old man and his wife the Frenchman was a model lodger. He gave no trouble, kept regular hours, had no visitors, and was always ready with his rent.

But the young lady who was connected with the "theatre" was not always ready with her rent. She had been out of an engagement for a considerable time, and her means were nearly exhausted. She had paid no rent for six weeks. The old man and his wife were loth to turn the girl out of her room, but all the same they wanted their money.

All at once an idea struck me. "Suppose the young lady and I exchange rooms," I said. "Her room is larger than mine; besides which the light is better for painting. If she will agree to this, I will pay up her back rent, and also a month's rent in advance of the room she will move into."

"If she don't accept your offer, sir," said the old man, "I'll send her packing before she's a day older."

But she did accept it with tears of gratitude the next day. While the Frenchman was from home, the transfer of chattels was effected, and that night I slept in one of the two rooms on the second-floor front. Only a thin brick wall now separated Lenoir and myself.

One other piece of information was furnished me by my landlord's garrulity, which might or might not prove useful in time to come. He gave me to understand that he had a pass-key which would open the lock of every door in the house. He had supplied himself with this in consequence of one of his lodgers having committed suicide in his room, and the affair not having been discovered for upwards of a week. Ever since that time, if any of his lodgers were missing for more than twenty-four hours, he entered their rooms without ceremony, and satisfied himself that all was right on his premises. I did not fail to note carefully the particular nail in the plate-rack on which the master-key was usually hung.

Lenoir and I were now close neighbours indeed, but still, in one sense, as far apart as ever. The proverbial politeness of foreigners was certainly not exemplified in his case; and, for my own part, seeing that I could never pass the man without a shudder, it was hardly likely that I should try to cultivate his acquaintance. He must have known that I lodged in the same house with him; in all probability he was quite aware that I had removed into the room next his; but whether on that account he distrusted me, and began to regard me with suspicion, I have no means of knowing. In any case, there we were, separated only by six inches of wall, but as much strangers to each other as though one of us dwelt inside the Great Pyramid and the other one outside.

Many were the hours that I sat brooding and smoking by the open window of my room, turning over this scheme and that, vainly trying to devise some plan which should bring me nearer the end I had in view. That end I had by this time set clearly before myself. It was neither more nor less than to bring Lenoir to justice as the murderer of Osric Imray. That he was the murderer I never once doubted. The certainty was impressed upon me at the moment of my seeing

him and his shadow in conjunction at the café, and from that certainty I had never yet wavered.

By-and-by a scheme began to shape itself vaguely in my brain. I worked it out bit by bit, and adopted it at last only because I could think of nothing better. It might succeed in furthering my ends, but the probability was that it would not succeed. In any case it was better to make an effort and fail than not to make an effort at all.

But to carry out the scheme in question it was needful that I should have a confederate. I was not long in making up my mind as to whom that confederate should be. Some two years previously I had picked a young arab out of the London gutters and had induced him to sit to me, rags and all, as a subject in one of my pictures. I got to feel an interest in the lad, poor, neglected waif though he was, and after I had done with him for art purposes I determined not to lose sight of him. The result was that, after giving Tim eighteen months' rough schooling, I found a situation for him as assistant to a greengrocer. To this greengrocer I now went, and asked him to lend Tim to me for a month, a request with which he at once complied. So Tim and I went back to Winckworth Street, where Drew, my landlord, provided him with a shakedown in the attic.

The first thing I did next morning was to put into Tim's hand a lump of wax, one surface of which bore the impression of the wards of a key. It was a facsimile of Drew's master-key. Watching my opportunity evening after evening when I went downstairs to smoke a pipe with the old man, there came a time when he was called out of the room to answer a knock at the front door. Left alone, I possessed myself of the key for a couple of minutes, and took a careful impression of it on the piece of wax which I had brought in my pocket for that purpose. This I now handed to Tim. "Take this," I said, "and get a key made from it." Four days later he brought me the key.

I tried it on my own door first of all, but it would neither lock or unlock it. Then Tim procured two or three files of different sizes and patterns, and he and I worked on the key at intervals for a couple of days. At the end of that time our labours were crowned with success.

That moment of triumph was worth all the time and labour it had cost me. I inserted the key in Lenoir's lock, and the bolt shot noiselessly back: I turned the handle and the door seemed to open of its own accord. I stood on the threshold of Pierre Lenoir's room.

The room was an exact counterpart of my own. There was the same old-fashioned grate and quaintly carved chimney piece. The same deep skirting-board of oak, black with age. The same foliated cornice of ornamental plaster work running round the room at the junction of walls and ceiling. The same unwieldy shutters, and the same grand old door. Of the furniture I took no

note. Whether it were good, bad, or indifferent, was no concern of mine. Satisfied with what I had seen, I shut the door, relocked it, and went back to my own room. So far I had been successful. Should I be equally successful in that which I proposed to myself to do next?

I wanted to make a hiding-place from which, myself unseen, I could, whenever I should choose to do so, see everything that went on inside Lenoir's room.

Although he made a point of coming home at midnight, or soon after, Lenoir rarely retired to bed till a couple of hours later. Listening in the silence and darkness, I could hear him at intervals moving about his room long after everybody else was in bed, and all the lights in Winckworth Street but his own were extinguished. The question was, in what way did Pierre Lenoir occupy himself during those two hours? What did he find to do at that time of the morning? This was the problem I had set myself to solve, and the examination of Lenoir's room was but a preliminary step towards that end.

The first thing I did, the day after my visit to the Frenchman's room, was to send Tim out to buy a step-ladder of a certain height. This was readily obtained, and when Tim brought it I found that, as I stood on the second step from the top, my head nearly touched the ceiling of my room. I now proceeded to mark out, on the surface of the wall that divided my room from Lenoir's, a space measuring twelve inches in a straight line from the ceiling downwards, and twenty-four inches across the base.

As soon as Lenoir had gone out for the day I instructed Tim, in the first place, to strip the paper off the space thus marked out, and, in the second place, to carefully remove a couple of feet of the elaborate foliated cornice, which, as already stated, ran round the top of the room, and extended to a depth of six inches down the walls. This done, Tim's next job was to pick away the plaster from off the marked space till the bare bricks were exposed to view. The next thing was to remove the two top tiers of bricks for a space of twelve inches out of the twenty-four, and yet leave intact and unbroken the cornice and plaster work on Lenoir's side of the wall. This proved more easy of accomplishment than I had dared to hope. The mortar with which the bricks had been laid was rotten with age, crumbling almost at a touch, and was easily prodded out of the interstices between the bricks by means of the iron skewer which Tim made use of for that purpose. When this was done a little careful manipulation enabled me to remove the bricks one by one, till half a dozen of them were taken out and laid on the floor. The plaster on the opposite side of the wall could now be seen, and the most difficult part of our task was yet before us.

Next afternoon, when Lenoir had gone out for the day and hardly anyone was left in the house, Tim, having unlocked the door by means of my duplicate key, took the step ladder and boldly planted

it and himself in the Frenchman's room, while I took up my position close to the opening in the wall of my room. Taking an instrument which I had made for the purpose, Tim inserted the point of it between two of the leaves of the cornice, and pressed it forward till it pierced clean through the plaster behind, so that its point became visible to me on the other side. The tiny hole thus made was carefully enlarged by scraping with the knife at the plaster till an irregularly-shaped orifice about two inches in diameter was cut out. A second hole was cut a few inches farther on in the same way. The result was that from my side of the wall, through the opening just made, I had a clear view over about two-thirds of the Frenchman's room, while it was next to impossible for him to detect the openings from his side, they being cut out behind the foliated work of the cornice, and consequently all but invisible from below. It was, in fact, as though I were looking out from behind a screen of leaves, only the leaves in this case were made of plaster of Paris. As soon as I was satisfied that there was nothing more to be done, I plugged up the holes with cotton wool for the time being. Tim brought back the ladder and carefully swept up every speck of plaster that had fallen on the floor of Lenoir's room. Then we relocked the door and waited for midnight.

As soon as twelve o'clock had struck I took up my position on the ladder and removed the plugs of cotton wool. The lamp in our room was then extinguished, and Tim coiled himself up in an easy-chair, waiting till he might be wanted. We had already provided ourselves with slippers made of felt, so that our movements might not be heard. By-and-by Lenoir came home. On entering his room he locked the door behind him, as he always did. Then he struck a match and lighted his lamp. Then he flung off his coat and waistcoat—the night was warm—and sitting down with the air of a man thoroughly tired out, he began to smoke. After a time he produced a bundle of letters from his pocket, and read them through one after another. All this was clearly visible to me from my eyrie close to the ceiling. Not only could I see his every movement, but the varying expressions that crossed his face were plainly to be seen. At half-past one he went to bed.

Two more evenings passed without anything of consequence taking place. On both occasions Lenoir amused himself with a pack of cards, shuffling and cutting them time after time, his object apparently being to ascertain how often out of a given number of times he could succeed in turning up an ace. But on the fourth evening my patience was rewarded. He got home rather earlier than usual and apparently in high good humour with himself, judging from the way he kept whistling and singing under his breath. Coat and vest having been flung aside as usual, and the inevitable cigarette lighted, he went to the window and satisfied himself that the venetians were so arranged that nothing which went on inside the room could be seen

from over the way. Then he went to the door and made sure that it was really locked. His next proceeding was a singular one.

The thought had struck me more than once that Lenoir's bedstead, as an article of furniture, looked considerably out of place among its shabby surroundings. It was made of mahogany, in the heavy old-fashioned style not often seen nowadays. The posts that supported the foot of it were especially substantial and solid-looking. Going down on one knee in front of one of these pillars, Lenoir with his finger and thumb drew out of its socket the circular piece of mahogany that covered one of the screw holes of the bedstead. Then selecting one very small key from several others on a ring that he drew from his pocket, he inserted it into a tiny keyhole in the woodwork of the bedstead, hitherto hidden behind the piece of mahogany which he had just removed. As he turned the key I heard a faint click, and the next moment he pulled open a little door in the lower part of the bed-post, which, turning on invisible hinges, exposed to view a recess or small cupboard cut out of the substance of the wood. From this recess he drew a roll of something that was covered with leather and carefully tied up. Then going to the table he sat down, drew the lamp closer to him, and proceeded to unfasten the roll, the contents of which proved to consist entirely of bank notes. He rubbed his hands, and chuckled to himself, and nodded his head at the notes as soon as he got them unrolled. "Ah! ha! here we are again, mes amis," he said. Then taking pen and ink and a sheet of paper, he proceeded to put down certain particulars concerning the notes, probably their numbers and value, turning them over one by one carefully and tenderly. Then he tied them up in their leather covering as before, put them back in the recess, relocked the little door, and replaced the piece of mahogany over the screw-hole. Then he rubbed his hands and chuckled to himself again. "To-morrow night," I heard him say, though he hardly spoke above a whisper, "he promised to come, and he won't break his word. Then I shall be rich—rich—rich!"

I could hardly doubt that the notes I had just seen were those which had been stolen from Imray, and for the sake of which he had been murdered, but how was I to make myself sure of that fact? Early next morning, some hours before Lenoir was in the habit of rising, I hunted up Sergeant Smith and had a long consultation with him. Unknown to himself, Lenoir was watched that day, from the moment of his leaving the house till the moment of his return. Acting on Smith's advice, I took up my position on the ladder this evening a couple of hours earlier than usual. Lenoir came home at eleven, a most unusual proceeding with him, and brought with him a bottle of cognac. Having lighted his lamp, he took the roll of notes out of its hiding-place and stuffed it, for the time being, under his pillow. Hardly was this done when I heard a low, peculiar whistle. Lenoir heard it also. He went quickly downstairs,

opened the front door, and presently came back, followed by a stranger. The bottle of cognac was opened and the contents approved of, and then the two men sat down to business, one on each side of the little table, with the lamp between them. They spoke in low tones, and in French. The stranger was there to buy the notes, the numbers of which were known, but which he presumably had the means of forcing into circulation, either on the Continent or across the Atlantic. The question which he and Lenoir were arguing now was simply one of price. At length they came to terms, and the roll of notes was produced. The stranger checked them off carefully against a list which he had brought with him, and then put them away into an inner pocket. "The gold is at my lodgings," I heard him say. "Come with me, and you can have it at once." "Why didn't you bring it with you?" asked Lenoir, sulkily. "It was too heavy," said the other, laconically. "Besides ——" "You did not care to trust yourself here with so much hard cash about you," sneered the Frenchman, as he took up his hat. The stranger only laughed and lit another cigarette.

Lenoir then extinguished his lamp, and the two men went downstairs together and let themselves out at the front door, but only to find themselves next moment in the arms of Sergeant Smith and three of his men, who had been lying in ambush for them. They were taken to the nearest police-station and searched. The notes proved to be those which were stolen from Imray, and in one of Lenoir's pockets was found a ring—the ring, originally mine, which I had exchanged with my friend for his the night we entered into that foolish compact.

Lenoir was examined before a magistrate and committed for trial, but three days later he contrived to commit suicide in his cell. The ingenious stranger, on whom the notes were found, had a term of penal servitude meted out to him for his share in the transaction.

I have nothing more to add, except that Tim is well and prosperous. Nothing would suit the lad but going into the police force as soon as he was old enough. He has risen to be a sergeant already. His ambition is to become a superintendent, have a fine horse to ride about on, and assist Royalty to open Parliament.



ENSIGN RANSON.

I SCARCELY remember the starting point of our conversation, though its scene rises up before me vividly as memory touches those magic plates which she keeps stored up in her mysterious chamber.

There were several young people gathered in Mrs. Martin's "parlour." Probably there was not another old lady in London had such a "parlour." From the long deep windows, the sloping walls, the low ceiling, and the chirping of birds, to say nothing of the scent of wall-flowers and musk, one fancied oneself in the ground-floor apartment of some quaint country cottage. In fact, it was a room on the topmost story of a grand old house in an old city square.

In that house Mrs. Martin had spent the last happy married days of her early womanhood, and there it was her wish to remain till she died. The house was far too large and too costly for a widowed woman's sole occupation, and so she had retreated, up and up, until she reached a solitude and a silence which the occupant of many a country High street might have envied. A perfect curiosity was her little habitation, its walls covered with pictures, its corners bright with dainty old china, its whole replete with every simple comfort. The old lady herself rarely went out now, but she did not lack visitors. There were some with great names and great powers who, in the world of fashion, found no temptation to forget their old friend; and there were many more, bright saucy lads and sweet enthusiastic girls, who found with her a refuge and a rest, where they could flutter their incipient wings safely and happily.

I can only remember that, at that time, some great trial was running its course, and all England was eager for the sight of the evening papers, which one of us had brought in, and the contents of which we had been all eagerly discussing, rashly giving our decided judgments on points over which the jury of twelve "good men and true" would have to spend many an hour of weary consideration.

One witness came in for our special animadversion. In her cross-examination some question had been put to her which she had declined to answer, and on appealing to the judge whether she was compelled to do so, had received an answer in the negative.

"We all know what that means," was the dictum of our juvenile leader, in which we all heartily concurred. "If what she must have answered would have been to her credit, she would not have hesitated, whether the question was justifiable or not. We may be sure that her answer would probably have evoked some further question, with results still more discreditable to her."

There was quite a little chorus of assent on this point ; only Mrs. Martin was quite silent, and gave her knitting-needles a peculiar shift, which we had long learned to recognize as what would be described in parliamentary language as "murmurs of dissent."

"Don't you think so, too?" asked one of us, turning to the old lady with that deference which we always felt to be due to her, even when her wisdom differed from that of our contemporary Solomon.

"My dear, it may be so—but it may not," she answered. "I know a little story on this very point. I knew a gentleman who was present when the incident happened."

We were all attention. A story was not to be slighted, even when told to prove ourselves in the wrong.

"Well," said Mrs. Martin, "many years back, long before I was born, and that is nearly sixty years ago, a young man came out of a little house at the eastern end of a town by the sea. There was plenty of life and gaiety at the other end of the town, which was enlivened by one or two barracks, a fort, and a castle. But the eastern end was very poor, and would have been quite lonely but for the fishermen and their boats. The house from which the young man came was beyond even this homely bustle, and was little more than a wooden hut, tarred to defend it from wind and weather. Its only near neighbour was a huge windmill whose gaunt arms were almost over its humble roof ; and though its windows and doorstep were clean and its curtains white, it was clearly a very poor place, where none but very poor people would live.

"But the young man who came out was in the full dress of a military officer, though that was screened from a first view by the long grey cloak which the wild March wind made so necessary. He looked back and waved his hand toward the little house, as if he knew that somebody there was watching him, though certainly nobody could be seen from the outside. And then he turned and struggled against the strong gale which blew in from the sea.

"He was quite young, and his face was finely cut, and would have been pleasant but for a look of stern and painful sorrow, not unmixed with bitterness, which seemed strangely incongruous with his years and his dress.

"He walked on quite through the town. There were few people taking exercise for pleasure in that rough weather, and the crowd of shipping in the Downs made the seaward view almost less lonely than the shore. It was a very simple little town, with red-tiled, decent dwelling-houses crowded forward towards the sea, as if their inmates wanted to watch the boatmen and fishers from as near a point as they might. Wherever the houses broke apart, one caught glimpses of a wild, flat country, dotted here and there with weird trees in Indian file ; and the youth looked wistfully towards these desert fields, as if he would fain have struck away across them, instead of going on, as he did, towards the grim old fort.

"Yet there, it was clear, festivity was going forward, and friendly voices greeted him as he passed the grey old portal. And then, over his stern, sad face he dropped a mask of gaiety, and though he relapsed into silence at times, he was as polite and conversible as the best of them.

"There was preparation for a dinner party in the fine stiff old hall, with its rows of military portraits, and its dingy blood-stained banners. The castle, the barracks, and the fort itself had eagerly furnished guests to welcome the visitor of the day, a grand old General recently returned from honourable victories in the south of Europe.

"To our ideas of to-day," said Mrs. Martin, shaking her dear, white-capped head, "there was perhaps a great deal in that dinner-table conversation which ought not to have been. We have left off openly despising our then enemies the French, or speaking of any foreign allies much as if they were vermin, whom it was our good pleasure for the time being to support and protect. Let us not be afraid to condemn our honourable grandfathers in that wherein we think they were wrong. Only let us humbly remember that, strive as we may, we ourselves shall still say and do many things which, as we believe in God and progress, our still more fortunate descendants will characterise as ill-judged and perhaps wicked. We can but do our very best according to the light which is vouchsafed to the world in our day.

"After dinner, when ceremony was fairly thawed, the good old General in the kindness and pride of his heart displayed a little box, which had been given to him by some grandee of Spain. I think it must have been too small for a snuffbox, and was probably one of those tiny trifles in which fashionable folk used to carry comfits and lozenges. At any rate, this box was set with diamonds and coloured gems of rare value, and it passed from hand to hand, flashing brightly in the lamp-light, while the old warrior told dread stories of his campaigns and of the daring and honour of his men.

"But suddenly, at the end of a story so thrilling that all heads had been craned towards him, while the military servants had thronged the door in rapt attention, the simple question was asked—

"Where is the General's jewelled box?"

"Nobody knew: everybody said that he had silently passed it on to his fellow.

"The General rummaged his own pockets, lest it had found its way back to him and he had half consciously put it away. No, it was not there, and the brave old fighting face looked a little blank, and he murmured an excuse about 'how its loss would vex Lady Elizabeth.'

"But it cannot be lost, General," cried the officer in command of the fort. 'In this room it was a few minutes ago, and in this room it must be still. No gentleman, to his knowledge, has it in his possession. Let the servants at the door come in, though, to the best of my belief, not one of them has approached the table since

the box was brought out. Let the door be made fast, and let our search be thorough.'

"The candles were brandished to and fro, under the tables, under the chairs, round the table drapery. But from no point flashed out the brilliant beauty of the little box.

" 'Still it must be here,' insisted the Commandant, 'and surely no gentleman will think his honour infringed if each in turn is asked to empty the contents of his pockets upon the table. I myself will be the first to do so. And the servants shall be the last.'

"Nobody could be expected to demur at so simple and sensible a proposal, backed as it was by the honest old officer instantly rattling out some crown pieces and a tobacco pouch, halfpence, and an old pipe. One after the other, the gentlemen on either side of the table followed his example, while sharp but not unfriendly eyes took eager note of strange pieces of personal property, and of dainty three-cornered notes, which might serve in the future as material for badinage and quizzing.

"But one drew back when the Commandant made his proposal. That young man who had walked in from the eastern end of the town dropped suddenly into his seat, whence he had risen in the first eagerness of the search. He passed his hand once or twice, nervously, through his hair, leaving it wild and straggling. And then he watched blankly, as the fruitless search drew nearer and nearer to himself. Within five minutes later, one or two of the officers were whispering to each other that any simpleton might have seen he did not expect it could be found.

"His turn was the very last. 'Ensign Ranson,' said the Commandant steadily. Ensign Ranson was certainly the first who had required to be called upon by name.

"The youth arose. And though the rest of his face was of a deadly whiteness, there was a spot of burning red on each cheek.

" 'I don't think any gentleman should be asked to do this,' he said. 'I will give my word of honour that the box is not upon my person. I did not even keep it in my hands for a moment, I merely took it and passed it on.'

" 'Too high-minded even to look at such gew-gaws,' sneered a spiteful old major, under his breath.

" 'What men high in the service and old enough to be his father have already done, Ensign Ranson may safely do also,' said the Commandant, with a severity which was not unkindly, for young Ranson looked such a boy among the crowd of men, mostly stout and middle-aged; and the very suspicion suddenly lowering over him made the old officer think of his own lads, growing up, and not quite sure to do well for themselves after all.

" 'I would never have asked it for the sake of my box,' observed the General, leaning back in his chair, and inwardly wondering what Lady Elizabeth would say of his carelessness.

"'But we ask it for the sake of our honour, General,' said the Commandant testily.

"'And we do not seem to have asked it needlessly,' whispered the spiteful major.

"'I will not do this thing!' cried the young Ensign passionately, and he looked wildly round the group as if he sought for one face that would comprehend and compassionate his misery. The face which looked the kindest was that of the old General himself, partly because it was not his hospitality which was outraged, partly because his genial nature was terribly shocked at finding anything of his the cause of such a wretched act of dishonour.

"'If the General will come with me to the ante-room,' said the young man, 'I will convince him that I have not touched his box. But this public exposure I will not submit to: our consent was not asked, and —'

"'Certainly not!' 'Out upon you!' 'General, you must not think of indulging his insolent request,' were the only sentences audible in the general hubbub that arose on every side.

"'But the General rose. 'Gentlemen,' he said, quietly, 'I have never yet refused to listen to an enemy's petition. If you can satisfy me, sir, perhaps your comrades will take my word for you.'

"'There was a murmur of very reluctant acquiescence, as the Ensign bowed and waited respectfully to follow the General to the ante-chamber. They had not disappeared behind the heavy curtains before all sorts of surmises were whispered round the table, guesses and hints so wild and so sinister as to do credit neither to the heads nor the hearts which originated them. The General and the Ensign stayed a longer time in the ante-room than would have sufficed to search the Ensign's pockets twice and thrice over. Not a sound could be heard. If any conversation was going forward, it must have been in a very low voice. The two gentlemen were away for nearly half an hour. All the military servants had been subjected to the Commandant's rigid scrutiny, and then dismissed. It might be as well that none but the 'gentlemen of the regiment' should know exactly what the end was. The delay grew first awkward and then awful. Even the whispers and rumours flagged into an intent and excited watching.

"'At last the General and the Ensign came out. The Ensign's face was still very pale; what flush remained upon it had now mounted to the eyes. The old General was blowing his nose.

"'Ensign Ranson has thoroughly satisfied me,' he said, in his most genial voice. 'Never mind my box. It has vanished by one of those mysterious accidents which will happen sometimes. It will be found some day. And now, gentlemen, perhaps as we have been thus broken up we shall not settle down again very comfortably to-night. I hope we shall see you all at the Castle before Lady Elizabeth and I leave for London.'

"'General,' said the Commandant, drawing him a little on one side, 'may I say that I sincerely trust your great generosity has not led you to ——'

"'Sir,' cried the old General, 'can you imagine that any mistaken idea of kindness would cause me to make you a companion of thieves? Gentlemen,' he went on, seeing that the company were not unaware of his little by-play, 'I pledge you my word that I am satisfied of Ensign Ranson's honour, and whoever dares to doubt him makes me to be his accomplice.'

"And the old General seized the young Ensign's arm and marched with him from the banqueting-room, while everyone sat dumb-founded, till the spiteful major remarked that wonders would never cease.

"There was nothing more to be said. It was discovered that Ensign Ranson was not only invited to the Castle with the other officers, but was also asked there by himself, and actually was believed to have taken tea with the General and Lady Elizabeth in their deepest retirement. For the General's sake rather than his own, his brother officers continued on courteous terms with him; and he had always been so shy, and held himself so aloof, that perhaps he did not discover there was but little cordiality in their courtesy. And presently he exchanged into another regiment, which went on foreign service.

"He was away for several years, and in the fortunes of war he got rapidly promoted, so that when he returned home, though he was still young, he was no longer a poor nobody. When he landed in his own country he found a letter awaiting him, written by one who had sat near him at that memorable dinner-party, and who was now residing in the old Castle where the General and Lady Elizabeth had then been guests. This letter pressed him, in the warmest terms, to spend some of his earliest days in England at this very Castle, and so give many old friends who were in the neighbourhood an opportunity of meeting and congratulating him. Ensign Ranson, now Colonel Ranson, smiled a little strangely when he read this invitation, but he wrote a very polite reply and accepted it.

"Once more he sat in the stately old banqueting-room of the fort. This time he had not walked in from the bleak east end of the town, but had been driven from the Castle in the chariot of the Castle's owner. But, as he took his seat in the chair of honour, he noticed that every face at the table was, in all its changes, familiar to him. All of the guests at the former dinner were not there. Many of those, indeed, he well knew, were sleeping on battlefields far away. But nobody was at this dinner who had not been at that other one.

"Once more the dishes were removed and the servants withdrawn. The guest of this evening was no wonderful story-teller, like the good old General, who had now passed to his rest. Colonel Ranson was as taciturn as Ensign Ranson had been shy, and he even let the conversation flag and never seemed to notice it.

“ ‘Colonel,’ said the eldest gentleman of the party, speaking with visible effort, and giving a slight cough to veil his embarrassment; ‘Colonel, I think we all remember another time when we dined together here.’

“ ‘Certainly, I remember it,’ answered the Colonel, lifting his grey eyes, with a cool light in them.

“ ‘Colonel, we fancy you think some of us did you ill justice then. At least, a lady says you felt so—Lady Elizabeth, the good old General’s widow. If what we are going to do is in any way painful to you I hope you will pardon us, for we are only following her counsel. Colonel, there was a box lost that evening. Here it is.’

“ ‘Yes, there it was, gleaming once more in the light which danced gaily upon it. The Colonel looked at it calmly, and asked :

“ ‘Where was it found ?’

“ ‘His composure was exceedingly disconcerting. Another gentleman, feeling that the first had done his part, now took up the parable.

“ ‘It was found in the very chair on which you are now seated, Colonel,’ he said. ‘You will remember that the General sat there on that night. It must have found its way back to the General’s own hand, and in the interest and excitement of his own story-telling, he must have intended to slip it back into his pocket, which, if you recollect, was the first place where he sought it. Instead of that it evidently escaped the proper orifice, and dropped into the covering of the chair; that covering was very thick and heavy, and hung in lappets about his legs. Part of it was unsewn, and this box dropped between the damask and the lining, and remained there safely and unseen till the chair was re-covered last year.’

“ ‘Gentlemen,’ said the Colonel, with his accustomed calmness, though his lip trembled a little, ‘I cannot wonder if some of you thought my conduct suspicious. I thank you heartily for showing me your brotherly delight that those suspicions were unfounded.’

“ ‘At the bottom of the table sat the spiteful old Major (he was on half pay now, and more spiteful than ever), and he thought within himself that there was no knowing whether Ensign Ranson had not taken some subsequent opportunity of getting rid of his dangerous booty into the hole in the damask, and that the mystery could not be called cleared up unless the Colonel had explained why he had demurred to the search. And this spiteful old Major would have said as much to his next neighbour, if he himself had not been so terribly deaf that he could not regulate his own voice between a confidential whisper and a mighty shout.

“ ‘The Colonel sat in silence for some minutes, and toyed with his wine-glass, as if he quite forgot where he was. Then he recalled himself with a start, and, drawing something from his own pocket, said quietly :

“ ‘Gentlemen, I, too, have something to show you.’

"All pressed forward as he carefully unfolded the soft paper packet and laid something on the table. What was it? What could it be?"

"It was the bleached skeleton of a chicken's wing.

"Gentlemen," he said, in that same quiet voice, which no longer sounded cold and stern, but rather full of strength and sweetness, 'when I was here before, I was a poor fatherless lad, owning nothing in the world but my poor little pittance of pay. I fear I was an eyesore to some of you. I think you felt that my appearance did not do justice to the dignity of our regiment. I believe I often looked rather shabby, but really I could not help it.

"I had only one relation in the world, and that was my mother's sister. After my mother died she had been as a mother to me, but when our home was finally broken up, there was nothing for it but she must be a governess in a stranger's house. And she did her work courageously and cheerfully enough, till her health failed, and nobody wanted the service of a sick woman.

"She had always been good to me. And we two had only each other in the world. I could not help her as she ought to have been helped, but my pay would at least provide her such a home and such maintenance as a poor working man can give to a poor working woman.

"I took my aunt to lodge with the wife of the miller's man, in the little black cottage beside the mill. She was a kind, cleanly woman, though rough and plain in her ways, and my poor aunt used to call herself very happy there. But she could not eat the simple food my scanty means could procure. And the good landlady used to break my heart by suggesting that her appetite might be tempted by chickens or game, or such other luxuries beyond my utmost reach.

"All the day of that memorable dinner-party my aunt had been very feeble and failing. When I left her I really wondered whether she would be alive when I saw her again. My soul revolted at the sight of dainties which were no good to me, and which I could not convey to her who seemed dying for want of them. Suddenly, a bright idea seized me. I took a letter from my pocket, and spread it on my napkin, and then, by an adroit movement, transferred the wing of a chicken from my plate to the paper, and thence smuggled it to my pocket.'

"The listening guests began to look at each other with enlightened eyes. The spiteful old Major felt that a very full explanation was being given—and he was glad he was deaf, that he need not hear it!

"Gentlemen, you can all imagine my feelings when such unlooked for circumstances threatened to expose my poor little plan. Gentlemen, there are some of you who were, like myself, young then—whom it would have been as hard to meet after such a discovery as it would have been had I really stolen the jewels.'

"Heaven forgive us, Ranson, but I can't say you are wrong,'

said one brave gentleman, who had been a fashionable dandy in those days, but who had a wife and six children now.

"Gentlemen, I did not fear the old man honoured and enriched by a grateful country. The men who have fought the best battles of life have ever a pitiful respect for the poor and the friendless. To him I could lay bare my poor little secret. But my place then was among the young—the young, who, having never conquered, always despise the defeated—the vain, giddy youths, extravagant with their fathers' money, and ——"

"Oh, come, Ranson," cried one officer, 'it is your turn now with a vengeance. Please to remember that to-night we are the abject and the defeated—and be merciful.'

"The Colonel laughed. And they could not tell whether it was with good faith or subtle irony that he rejoined 'You are right,' and then went on.

"In that little room, yonder, I told my sad story to that good great man who is gone. And I folded up my queer treasure again, for I could not leave it behind to bear witness; and besides, having paid such a terrible price for it, I did not see why my aunt should not have it. And she ate it for her supper that very night; and next morning, almost as soon as it was light, there was the General hammering at the cottage door, with a basket of fowls and fruit carried in his own hand. And, then and there, I took this little chicken bone, and vowed that I would keep it till the snuffbox was found, and I myself was such a man among such men that none would smile at my poverty, or even despise my weakness.'

"That is my story," said good Mrs. Martin, deftly folding up the stocking which she had finished off while she related it. "That is my story, as told me by my own uncle, who was at both those dinner-parties. And it has always taught me not to be too sure that there can be but one sort of reason for secrecy! My dears, we should never think evil while it is possible for us to imagine good. I believe that it is because God knows of so much goodness, which we never hear about, that He has patience with the world."



A DAY'S OUTING IN JAPAN.

HOW well I remember the tales of adventure and travel in the sunny tropics which formed the delight of my childhood ! How the writers revelled in descriptions of coral islands fringed with a white beach glistening with shells, the tall palms, and the brilliant verdure that charm the eyes of a traveller under the Southern Cross ! Not a hint of possible discomfort do these amiable enthusiasts ever give. According to them perfect happiness and freedom from the troubles of the world are all to be obtained in the lands of the tropics. So thought I, too : and at my earnest wish I entered Her Majesty's Navy at an early age—a wise regulation by which the young and ardent are enlisted in numbers. After arriving at years of discretion, the desire for seeing men and manners is by no means so eager. I soon found out that life in the South is not so free from care as my favourite authors had impressed on my youthful imagination. A hundred little petty annoyances make a man appreciate the benefits of a temperate climate when his good fortune has recalled him to any part of the world which enjoys that blessing.

It was my fate, in 187—, to serve in H.M. corvette *Lyre*, on the China station, and for the first twelve months we were ordered to the Straits Settlements. Now here, according to my young idea, should have been perfect bliss. We were almost on the line ; vegetation and foliage were truly magnificent ; while as for coral islands, their name is legion. Alas ! for the imperfection of human nature. I absolutely loathed the place after some time. We sailed regularly from Singapore to Penang, and Penang to Singapore : only varying the amusement by a month's cruise in the Straits, and a diet of salt horse and biscuit. Nothing to eat but hard, tough beef, and the invariable fowl and curry, generally spoilt in the process of cooking by incompetent hands. Add to this a thirst which nothing could ever quench, and a heat so great that any attempt at exercise brought on directly an attack of prickly heat, and it may be imagined with what delight we welcomed our orders to proceed to the North. They arrived after our spending a year at what some mistaken people have called, for reasons best known to themselves, the sanatorium of the East.

The cool north-east monsoon was blowing fresh down the China seas, and the heavy swell accompanying the wind was so great that the old *Lyre*, with her shaky engines, only just managed to fetch Hong Kong with her last ton of coal. Once there, however, the delightful weather which prevails at that beautiful island during the winter months soon restored the health of our ship's company, which had suffered considerably from the exertions of boat-cruising in the

Straits, and after a couple of months spent in refitting, the *Lyre* sailed for Japan.

Nagasaki was the first port at which we called, but as we only stayed here long enough to take in coal, few of us were able to visit the pretty little town, which is one of the cleanest even in Japan. After leaving Nagasaki we sailed through the Straits of Simonosaki into the beautiful inland sea, the scenery of which almost surpasses description, and must be seen to be appreciated. At the eastern end of the sea is the port of Kobe, better known as Hiogo, which is open by treaty to foreigners, and here we anchored for a week to give the men general leave.

Such an opportunity of a run ashore was not to be sneezed at after a fortnight at sea, and a little party of us landed one morning for a couple of days' walk. Besides myself, there were the senior surgeon of the ship, Brown, and Wilson, the paymaster. As we did not know anything about the resources of the country, we took our provisions and liquor in the havresac which each carried on his shoulder; and a stout stick was an excellent assistant in climbing the hills, and a good defence in case of emergency.

Our ideas as to the state of the country and the safety of foreigners were very limited. The ship, whose relief we were, was at Yokohama, so that we had not been able to get any of the information from her which would assist us in our journey. The Doctor had had some little experience of the country some years previously: but at that time a man's life was not safe outside the limits of the foreign settlements, and the only glimpses which he had seen of the interior had been taken in the course of a few rides in large bodies well armed. However, we were assured at Kobe that we should be quite safe in walking as far as a place called Arima, about fifteen miles out, where we could spend the night. So we stepped out gaily on our journey, and, passing through the town, which lies in a plain between a lofty range of hills and the sea, soon found ourselves well on the road.

The path lay for miles through a deep gorge following the windings of the hills that bounded it on either side. Below us foamed a torrent, which found its course through the gorge into the sea, its bed dotted here and there with huge boulders, apparently carried down from the mountain during the rainy season. As we climbed along the broad, steep road that lay along the sides of hills covered with short grass and occasional fir-trees, we continually met peasants carrying the produce of their toil in neat bamboo baskets, slung at each end of a pole carried across their shoulders: as a milkman at home bears his cans. Then came priests with shaven heads, dressed in gaudy robes, and affably acknowledging the salutations of the passers-by. And the ladies!—what pen could do justice to their charms? There they were in dozens, in neat coloured garments, a bright sash round the waist, their little feet shod in

high wooden clogs to protect them from the mud of the roads, which reduced their progress to an ambling walk, their hair strained back over the forehead, and rolled round a large pin at the back of the head, and their bonny faces perfectly radiant with health and good-humour. There is something about the Japanese girls which I can only describe by the nautical term of "fetching." It is not their beauty; for, measured by our standard of regularity of features, their broad, rosy faces and somewhat snub noses would scarcely be called even pretty. But there is a certain pleasant, lively way of talking which distinguishes them, and a perfect absence of shyness, that, coupled with their unfailing good-humour and piquant dress, exercise a perilous influence on the hearts of susceptible foreigners. From one and all these people came the hearty salutation, "Ohayo, Anatta" (good morning, sir), whether from the gentleman travelling with his family and servants, or the poor peasant leading his pack-horse covered with jingling bells and laden with a burden that seemed immense compared with the little sturdy animal that bore it.

Fine weather and cheerful companionship have a very exhilarating effect on a pedestrian, and we stepped gaily along the steep road which for six miles ascended the mountain: only stopping occasionally to clamber down the rocks to the little bubbling stream, to get a draught of pure water with just a taste of whiskey to weather the animalcules. Then a little wayside tea-house gave a reasonable excuse for a halt, so we took off our havresacs, and reclined for half an hour on the clean white mats which nearly every Japanese house can boast.

Curiosity is a strongly marked characteristic of the Japanese, and in a few minutes we had a crowd around us, asking all sorts of questions about ourselves and our business, and critically examining our dress and personal appearance, although with perfect good-humour. Brown carried off the honours, partly from his knowing something of the language, but principally on account of a huge black beard which he sported. The natives of the East are by no means Esaus, and even the small amount of hair which can be grown on their faces is religiously shaved off till they attain ripe years. The less hirsute members of the party had to be contented with the honours reflected from the chief, who was the subject of much respectful inquisitiveness, especially from the female part of the crowd, who seemed to think that a man who could boast a beard like that must be a prince at least in his native land.

Refreshed by our short rest, we resumed our climb, and soon reached the summit of the hills, where the road lay for some distance through fields of paddy and corn, only separated from each other by the narrow footpaths necessary for the tillers. Then came an abrupt descent through woods, following the course of a mountain torrent, which foamed through a deep cleft in the rocks far beneath, almost hidden from sight by the dense overhanging foliage of trees and

shrubs. Then across a stone bridge, through a little village which lay snugly ensconced in a valley between lofty hills, and we ascended the steep road beyond, singing a lively song, which brought the people out in dozens to have a peep at the foreigners. After climbing for a couple of miles up this hill, we found, on enquiring from some passing peasants, that we had mistaken the road, so we had to retrace our steps to the village we had left, where we found the proper path with some difficulty. It was a great contrast to the fine road we had left, being ankle deep in mud in many places, and we had repeatedly to cross and recross a shallow brook on stepping stones so slippery that I always preferred getting my feet wet to risking the falls which my companions got once or twice. Another stiff climb along a narrow path through a thick wood, and then an abrupt descent brought us to the little village of Arima, which lies in the deep basin of the hills.

We soon found our way to the temple at which we intended to stop, and entering the gate amidst a vociferous barking from all the dogs of the village, we were received by a person with a shaven head, who knelt down on the mats, and, touching the floor three times with his forehead, bade us welcome. At the first sound of this person's voice we started, and looked at each other in surprise. An animated discussion ensued as to the sex, but it was soon settled by the old priestess herself—as she turned out to be. Nothing could exceed her attentive kindness. She bustled about, arranging our clothes and bags, and bringing hot water to wash our feet. I incautiously intrusted my boots to her care, making signs that she was only to dry them; but she executed the commission a great deal too faithfully, for next morning I found that she had baked them till they were as hard as brickbats. Wilson and I busied ourselves in preparing a room, in which we got the old woman to place a *hibachi* (or charcoal stove), with the help of signs and a dictionary, while Brown made a foraging expedition into the village, whence he returned in great triumph, accompanied by a "*posse comitatus*" bearing bottles of Bass, and eggs and potatoes sufficient for a meal.

We were quite ready for dinner now, if dinner were only ready for us; so we took our bacon and showed it to the old lady, who examined, it curiously. Calling her husband, a burly old priest, she held a solemn consultation with him, at the end of which she returned it with a polite bow, intimating that she did not know anything about it. What was to be done? For, strange to say, neither of us knew anything of the mode of cooking the stuff, which we now regretted bringing. At last the Doctor heroically announced his intention of attempting the feat, and soon he had the old priest hard at work fanning the charcoal fire, while the bacon frizzled in a pan on top. A tantalizing smell soon pervaded the house, and matters began to look more cheerful. Wilson and I were laying out a newspaper for a cloth, and arranging our little stock of beer on the table, when we

fancied we smelt something burning. We went out to the cooking room, where we found Brown in his shirt-sleeves, energetically shaking the pan, and encouraging the priest, who was furiously shaking the fire. A faint odour, as of soot, was beginning to make itself perceptible.

"Don't you think it's done?" I observed.

"Oh, no," answered Brown. "Fry till brown, it says in all the cookery-books, and the blessed stuff is quite white yet. Fan away, Johnny."

So saying, he gave the pan a brisk shake, that sent all the fat into the fire, and raised a tremendous blaze, nearly setting the old priest alight. With some difficulty we persuaded our energetic "chef" to discontinue his operations, while we examined the bacon to see whether it was done. Alas! it was a mere calcined fragment that fell to pieces on being touched with a fork.

"I tell you what it is," observed Brown, "there's something radically wrong in the state of Denmark. If that bacon was good, it wouldn't have frizzled up in that absurd manner, so I vote we have a stew. I saw some beef in a shop down the village, and we can kill a fowl, and the old woman has vegetables galore."

Nothing better seemed to offer, so we went out for the beef, and putting it into the pot with a fowl cut up into pieces, we soon had it boiling merrily and once more diffusing odours tantalizing to hungry men.

"I think this will be a success," said Brown, as he lifted the lid for the fiftieth time to inspect progress. "Suppose you fellows make a Welsh rabbit while this is finishing."

Wilson and I hastened to do this, and had just accomplished it to our satisfaction, when the abominable odour of soot again commenced. We rushed out, and found the Doctor ruefully looking into the pot, whence the evil smell was evidently proceeding.

"It was getting on so well," he said, sorrowfully, "when I thought some rice would improve it, and I fancy it must have consumed all the water, for I can't see any liquid at all. But it isn't much the worse, and it's better than nothing."

However, after a sniff at the obnoxious article, Wilson and I respectfully declined partaking of it, and contrived to broil a little bacon for our own dinners: while the Doctor bravely consumed his own stew, with many a growl at our dainty stomachs that couldn't put up with a little burning. By the time we had finished our long-delayed meal, darkness had come on, and the old lady brought in some rude lamps which shed a dim religious light over the scene. So we stretched ourselves on the floor round the charcoal stove, smoking and sipping some hot grog which we had managed to brew. Two or three of the neighbours had come in to have a peep at the foreigners, and were squatting on the mats near the door, whispering to each other what were evidently remarks on our dress and

manners. Still, they were all so cheerful and good-humoured, that, although unaccustomed to be watched in this manner, we allowed them to remain there peaceably; and getting a pack of cards out of a havresac, commenced a game of cribbage. In the village occasional bursts of noisy laughter and the sound of musical instruments showed that some of the good people were intent on enjoying the night. The rain, however, had come down so heavily that an exploring expedition which we had planned had to be abandoned, and after we had finished our game, we ordered some of the native spirit (*saki*), and endeavoured to extract information of the country out of our visitors: a rather difficult matter with our limited knowledge of the language.

At length we began to feel sleepy, and as we could not make our friends understand that we wanted to retire, we had to lie down and go through the pantomime of profound slumber, when they were good enough to leave us. The old priestess bustled about the room, laying down thick quilted robes for us to sleep on (popularly known as *flea-bags*), and others to cover us during the night. The paper screens which divided the room from the outer air were drawn, and wooden partitions fixed up outside these. Then the old lady, after insisting, in spite of our remonstrances, on tucking in the *flea-bags* round us, wished us good-night with profound obeisances, and we were left to ourselves. As usual in a tea-house, a lamp was placed in the room, consisting of a long wick in a saucer of oil, protected from wind by a paper screen, which shed a feeble light on the three prostrate forms. For some time we lay quietly smoking and listening to the gentle murmur of the little stream which ran in front of the house, and then Wilson broke the silence by observing that the people we had met to-day seemed exceedingly polite and kind.

"Yes," said the Doctor, "they always were that, and yet it is not ten years ago that murder after murder was being committed on unfortunate foreigners. A man would as soon have committed suicide as done what we have been doing to-day. But then every native you met bore a sword, and was uncommonly ready to use it if you gave him any pretence for it. I hear they have gone quite on the other tack now, and are trying to meet foreigners on their own ground."

"They're honest, I suppose, in this house," said Wilson, "for I left my clothes and bag in the shanty outside."

"No doubt of that," answered Brown. "They are not like the heathen Chinese, who never loses a chance of picking and stealing."

"Yes," observed Wilson, thoughtfully, "he's a smart man, is John Chinaman. You need rise pretty early to get the better of him. I never did weather the heathens but once, and that was in my last ship, when we were at Hong-Kong in the winter of '6—. I had been dealing with Ah Foo, the bootmaker, for canvas shoes, and I was tolerably certain that I had paid for everything as I received it.

One day, however, I was rather taken aback, when master Ah Foo presented me with a bill for five dollars. 'Hullo, what b'long this?' said I. 'That b'long two pair shoes, my have catchee for master,' said the old rascal.

"'What thing you talkee,' I said in a rage. 'My makee pay all proper before.'

"'Master talkee my, can pay all proper by'm bye,' was the old rascal's reply. And the end of it was that, not having a receipt to show, I was compelled to pay the villain. But I thought to myself, I'll square yards with you some day, my friend, and very soon afterwards I did that same. I was in the dockyard, looking after some stores, when whom should I see but Ah Foo coming into the gate with a pair of boots under his arm.

"'Chin, Chin! Ah Foo,' I sang out, 'who b'long those boots?'

"'B'long Mister Lousee, master,' he answered. You must remember Jack Rouse, Brown: that was the nearest approach the Chinamen ever could make to his name. As he said this, a brilliant idea struck me, which I at once put into execution. I pulled a face as long as the main topgallant bowline, and said, sorrowfully:

"'What! you no have heard, poor Mr. Rouse have gone topside. He makee die this morning.'

"I thought the old rascal would have gone mad. He dropped the boots on the jetty, and stood staring at me with his cross-jack* eye rolling fearfully.

"'What thing!' he stammered out at last. 'Mr. Lousee talkee my catchee pair boots.'

"'He no wanchee boots now, Ah Foo,' I said in a tone of deep pathos, while I was almost bursting with laughter at his dismayed face.

"'But Mister Lousee no talkee wanchee die, he talkee my wanchee pair of boots!' he almost whimpered.

"I succeeded in persuading him, at length, that dead men had no occasion for boots, and he turned away to leave, muttering his grievance of a man dying after ordering a pair of boots, when I remarked carelessly—

"'Number one boots, Ah Foo?'

"'Oh, number one,' he said eagerly. 'Suppose master like, can catchee, seven dollars.'

"'Now look here, Ah Foo,' I said sternly, 'my have found receipt for five dollars I pay you too muchee. Suppose you like to give me these boots, can do all right.'

"I showed him his receipt, and he admitted he owed me the five dollars, but demurred at letting me have the boots, saying that they cost him more than that. At length he consented, saying, with a groan, that he had lost a dollar over the job. I sent the boots off to the ship at once, and Ah Foo was leaving the yard very disconsolate, when he met Jack Rouse himself, who at once began

* Pronounced "crodgic"—nautical for a squint.

abusing him for not bringing the boots before. Poor Ah Foo thought it was a ghost at first, till Jack shook him. Then he saw the whole trick, and back he came tearing along the jetty in a furious rage to where I was standing.

“ ‘What for you talkee lie pidgin,’ he shouted: and was beginning to get abusive, when Rouse came up and some other fellows, and there was such a roar of laughter at poor Ah Foo’s *bootless* anger, that he rushed out of the gate very crestfallen. I told him next time I saw him that I hoped it would be a warning to him; and I must say that for the future he was careful in his dealings with me. But even now you have only to ask him about Rouse’s boots, and he gets very red in the face.”

A snore was the only answer given by the Doctor to this tale, for he had fallen asleep during the recital: so Wilson, who seemed to be in a talkative mood, turned his attention to me.

“I remember when I was on the coast, in the old *Snorter*——” when fatigue overcame me also, and all was blank.



THE BEAUTIFUL.

One entrance to God’s Temple was the gate
Men called “The Beautiful,” and to this day
We may find access there, since early, late,
Open it stands to all who pass that way.
By the great teaching of the Beautiful,
So lavishly around our pathway spread,
Whether we stoop the fair wild flowers to cull,
Or gaze upon the stars above our head,
In everything He trains our hearts to learn
This glorious Truth—seen, save where eyes are dim,
In flowers that bloom—in distant stars that burn,
The Beautiful directly leads to Him!

THE WOOD-CUTTER'S WIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CHARCOAL-BURNER."

I.

SHE had a child in her arms, a little creature, a year old, whose rosy face nestled on her shoulder, shyly hiding at the sight of a stranger.

"What can I do for you, Ernestine?" I asked.

"Oh, if monsieur would be so good as to come and see Louis, he has had a sad accident. This morning, cutting wood in the dawn, with scarcely light enough to see by, he ran a splinter into his hand, and now it is swelled terribly."

I saw by her face that the accident was worse than her words seemed to make it, so, bidding her sit down, I wrote a line to the good doctor of Saint Eglise, and sent a boy with it on my pony. Then I took a bottle of soothing liniment from my medicine-chest, and started with Ernestine for her husband's cottage. It was a good half league from the village; it lay just within the fringe of a great wood, which covered the hill beyond it, clothing the height to its summit in gold, and brown, and crimson. To the left were a few patches of cultivated ground, but away to the right stretched the bare bleak steppes of the Ardennes, covered only with a shaggy heath, that looked dark and murky in the autumn air. The eye roamed over the bare, brown hills, catching no glimpse of these narrow and verdant vales, which, like deep gorges, or chasms cut in the rock, lie hidden between the steppes. Thus the prospect all around the cottage, save where the many-tinted wood gleamed and glistened in the sun, was bleak and sombre beyond description.

"A cold spot, Ernestine," said I.

"Ah, monsieur should see it in winter, when the snow is on the ground, and every hill is white for leagues and leagues about us. Then, but for the wood behind, which gives some shelter, I think we should die of cold."

Louis, the wood-cutter, was a young man of thirty, handsome as health could make him, and bearing on his sunburnt face an expression of intelligence and refinement not often seen in the peasants of the Ardennes.

One little child sat on his knee, another knelt before the fire, blowing the embers into a flame. On a small table stood a brown loaf and a pot of chicory water, which the Ardennais drink for coffee. Like a picture, I saw the scanty breakfast and the wistful face of the wounded man, gazing into the fire gloomily. Then our presence startled him, and he turned towards his wife with a cheerful look.

"I am glad thou art come back, Ernestine. I cannot cut bread for the little ones with my left hand, and they are hungry; monsieur is welcome."

And, putting down the child, he gave me a chair by the fire.

A slice of dark bread and a cup of chicory water, without milk or sugar; this was the poor repast on which the children feasted; and I waited till the meal was over before I unbound the man's hand. I perceived at once that only the most skilful surgery could save the hand from amputation, or even render it a useful member again. As I looked up I caught the man's sad and earnest gaze riveted on my face. Then his eyes turned slowly on his wife and children.

"Winter is coming on, monsieur," he said wearily. "Will my hand be long in getting well?"

"I hope not, Louis," I answered, "but the doctor will be here soon; he will be able to tell you better than I."

Then, as Ernestine went into the little court to fetch wood, I leant forward and whispered to him, "Louis, I fear your hand will be disabled a long while. I fear you will be able to work no more this winter."

He glanced at me in a frightened way, and then dropped forward wearily, with his head resting on his left hand. "God help me," he said, in a despairing tone. "What will become of my wife and children if I can't work?"

"Your neighbours will help you, Louis," I replied, cheerfully; "do not despair." The wood-cutter's face flushed painfully.

"Beggary!" he murmured; "have I brought her to beggary?"

"Louis," I said, earnestly, "when they hear you are laid up, Ernestine's parents will surely relent."

He shook his head sadly. "I cannot think so, monsieur, and of my own will, I will never let her go to them again. No, not even if we are starving."

Ernestine came back now with the wood, and as she laid it on the fire her anxious glance fell first on her husband, then on me. Seeing our grave faces, her eyes filled with tears.

"Tell me the truth, monsieur," she said, pleadingly. "Is the hurt serious?"

I was saved the pain of replying by the arrival of the doctor, who set about his work instantly, with all care and tenderness. Poor Louis fainted ere the work was done. His young wife stood by, aiding him with calm courage, till she saw him sink and fall, then her tears burst forth, and a sharp cry of agony was wrung from her lips.

"Send her to your house for wine," said the doctor to me, in English. "She is better away."

Seeing it was for Louis, she accepted the task gladly, departing with a swift step on her errand.

The doctor looked after her graceful figure in some surprise, as though wondering why one so young and fair should be visited with so much sorrow, but his patient requiring all his attention, he asked no questions then. But two hours later, when seated by my fireside, he took his pipe from his mouth, and said, abruptly,

"She has the air of a lady, that girl—how is that?"

"The wood-cutter's wife?" said I. "Well, the reason is a love-story, which I'll tell, if you like to hear it."

The doctor nodded, and refilled his pipe.

"She is very young," he said reflectively. "She does not look more than twenty: and she is very pretty," he added, as he put his pipe between his lips.

"Ernestine is twenty-three," I replied. "She has been married five years, and she has, as you saw, three little children and a husband whom she loves dearly. Tell me what you think of him."

"I think that the poor fellow will have lockjaw, unless his symptoms greatly change between this and to-morrow."

"It is too horrible," I answered, shuddering. "You must stay here to-night, and do all you can to save him."

"I will try my utmost," he said, gravely.

"When I asked you what you thought of Louis," I resumed, "I meant did you think him a man for whom a woman might commit a romantic folly without repenting?"

"Repentance always comes after folly," said the doctor.

"At all events," I returned, "if Ernestine repents, she does not repine. I have known her for four years, and I have never once heard her complain, or seen her moody."

"Who is she?" asked the doctor.

"You will be surprised when I tell you. She is the daughter of Monsieur Sarrasin, the rich old notary of Trêves."

"Why, he is worth a million livres," exclaimed the doctor, in astonishment. "I had heard his daughter had made a strange match, but I did not know she had descended so low as this."

"Not so low as you think," I responded; "Louis's birth is quite as good as Ernestine's, but his father became bankrupt, and the young man, as soon as he came of age, handed over to the creditors the small fortune which he had inherited from his mother."

"Romantic humbug," observed the doctor—"the sort of thing that tells on the stage, or in a story, but in real life fails altogether."

"In Louis's case it certainly failed," I answered, "inasmuch as it paid nobody in full, and it left him penniless. By his mad act Louis has made himself the deepest sufferer of all. His father saw this, and, crushed by his bankruptcy, his wife's death, and his son's ruin, he hastened to retire from the world."

"Now, in the days when his foundries and his quarry were flourishing, Monsieur Sarrasin had been glad to talk of a marriage between his daughter Ernestine and the young Louis Dartôt. Both were only

children, and it was a favourite scheme of their respective parents to unite the great fortunes that each would have. But the quarry failed, the foundry was burnt down, and the confidential clerk of Dartôt and Co. falsified the accounts, and ran away to America with all the ready cash upon which he could lay his hands. Ruin followed, and Monsieur Sarraasin shut Louis Dartôt from his house.

"Louis, now utterly penniless, accepted a situation as clerk to a brewer, a rich man, but coarse and unfeeling to a strange degree. The chief in the establishment, to whom Louis came for orders, and who might be looked upon as his master, was the brewer's eldest son—a fellow in whom there lurked all the extravagant vices of a great city, mingled with the meanness and cruelty inherent in his blood. Louis was slow to discover that the man silently hated him; nevertheless, this discovery was forced on him at last, through countless petty slights, sneering words, and, in the end, outspoken insults. But he bore them patiently, for his father, paralytic and feeble before his time, was dependent on his exertions for daily bread and comforts; so Louis worked on, in enduring silence, and Henri Mathiste revelled hourly in cruel sneers and cowardly fault-finding.

"All this while Louis had caught no glimpse of Ernestine, except at church, and each Sunday, or saint-day, he fancied she looked paler and thinner; but she turned away her face when he regarded her, and clung closer to her keen-eyed father. Thus things went on for six months, and then Louis, returning one night over-worked and weary to his poor lodging, found his father lifeless in his chair. Since his ruin and his wife's death, the poor old man could scarcely have been said to live, and now that the feeble spark of life was really gone, his poor, pinched face was so little changed from the aspect it had worn for many weary months, that his son spoke twice to him, and waited for an answer, not believing he was dead.

"It was hard to go to work next day, carrying that heavy grief with him cold at his heart, and harder still to bear Henri Mathiste's insolence, feeling, as he did, that at such a time gentleness was his due, even from an enemy. But to-day, young Mathiste was in brutal spirits, and in the exuberance of his cruel gaiety he cast off all reticence, flinging his sneers and insults on Louis's grief with a sort of reckless pleasure.

"'So the old bankrupt is dead,' he said, aloud in Louis's hearing. 'Well, he has paid his debt there, at all events; he might cheat everyone else, but death he could not cheat.'

"'Monsieur, he is a creditor from whom there is no discharge,' returned the old clerk to whom he spoke, bowing with a troubled air.

"Louis wrote on in his ledger, silently, although the indignation swelling in his heart half stifled him.

"'Here, you Dartôt!' cried the young brewer, 'I suppose you'll be wanting a holiday to-morrow, won't you, to bury the old man?'

" 'I bury my father at six to-morrow morning,' returned Louis, without looking up. 'I want no holiday, thank you.'

" 'Whew !' whistled Mathiste, 'we bury him at six in the morning, like a beggar, do we? '*

" 'Sir !' cried Louis, starting up in fury.

" But the old clerk pressed him down with one hand.

" 'Is it worth your while to be angry ?' he whispered.

" 'No, indeed,' returned Louis ; 'such a nature as his is worthy only of pity and contempt.'

" Seated, as he was, in an inner office, young Mathiste could only guess at these words, instead of distinctly hearing them. His face flushed with fury ; this bankrupt's son, then, despised him.

" But he would scarcely do that when he struck his last blow.

" 'You can do as you like about taking a holiday, Dartôt,' he said, in a sneering tone, 'but I intend to give all the other employés one, since to-morrow I sign my marriage-contract with Mademoiselle Sarraasin.'

" 'It is false,' returned Louis, as, pale as death, he rose and confronted the tormentor.

" 'You are polite, sir,' returned Mathiste, with great coolness, 'but I excuse you ; your misfortunes earn my pardon. I believe you had pretensions to the lady yourself once, but of course she declined the honour of an alliance with the son of a swindler.'

" As the words left his throat, Louis sprang at him and knocked him down. Perhaps he would have pommelled him heartily, but for the old clerk, who in breathless horror dragged him from the body of the fallen bully and led him away.

" Now, in Belgium an assault is a serious offence, punished by imprisonment, not by fine only ; luckily for Louis, the law requires *two* witnesses, and his enemy had but one, and he an unwilling one. For that same day Pierre Festin and Louis Dartôt both sent their resignations to Monsieur Mathiste the elder. The younger man, therefore, seeing where the old clerk's sympathies lay, thought it wisest to hold his peace concerning the blow that his rival had dealt him.

" In Pierre Festin's room, Louis clutched him by the arm, gasping breathlessly,

" 'Is this true what the coward says—does she marry him?'

" 'It is true, Louis ; we have known it this month past, only no one has dared to tell you.'

" 'Women are always cruel to the unfortunate ; they fly to riches, as the vulture to carrion,' said Louis, bitterly, as he sank into a chair. 'Well, she has chosen a happy time in which to strike the blow. She signs her marriage contract on the day that I lay my father in the earth.'

" A sob burst from him, and he covered his face with his hands.

* Early funerals are the cheapest, in most Roman Catholic countries.

"Pierre Festin looked at him pityingly. 'I believe Mademoiselle Sarrasin has been coerced into this,' he said. 'I know she has been made to think strange things concerning you. I will undertake to carry a letter to her, if you will write it.'

"'I'll send her my congratulations on her marriage,' returned Louis, scornfully; 'I'll let her know what I think of her bridegroom.'

"He seized pen and paper, and poured forth some of the gall and despair and wounded love rankling in his heart. The letter must have been a strange mingling of reproach, sorrow, and passion; it must have been written in words that burn, since it so wrought upon the mind of the girl who loved him that, falling upon her knees as she read it, she thanked heaven she was not yet Henri Mathiste's wife.

II.

"LATE that night, as Louis Dartôt sat alone, cowering over his small fire, the door of his poor garret was opened softly, and there stood, framed by the dingy arch around her, a pale, shrinking figure, upon whom his eyes fell wonderingly. Slowly, they gathered in the truth, and his lips, in pain and astonishment, uttered her name.

"'Ernestine!'

"'I am come,' said the girl, falteringly. But overcome with terror at the step she had taken she stopped and sank to the ground, trembling and weeping.

"'Why are you here, mademoiselle?' asked Louis Dartôt, coldly. 'You would be ruined in the estimation of your fiancé if he became aware of this strange visit to me.'

"'You are cruel,' cried Ernestine, as she lifted her tearful face from her hands.

"'Pardon me, mademoiselle, it is you who are cruel. On the eve of your marriage with another, you come to the man you have forsaken, to madden him with a sight of your face. You come to see his abject poverty, to see his misery, his grief. Yonder, in that dim corner, lies my father, a man whom you honoured and loved when he was rich. As for me, mademoiselle, you do right to despise me, because for a whole year I have borne the taunts and insults of that reptile whom to-morrow you take for your husband. But take care, lest as I lay my father in the grave I should think of you in your bridal finery, and curse you!'

"'Jealousy burneth like a fire,' and in its scorching pain Louis spoke madly and cruelly. For a moment, when his torrent of words ceased, no sound broke the silence save the low sobs of Ernestine. Then she said, in a broken voice, 'You wrong me, Louis. I was told you had forgotten me; they said you lived here with—with—in a word, they slandered you vilely, and I, seeing you never wrote to me, never strove to see me, I believed them. Then

I thought, since you loved me no more, there only remained for me on earth my duty to my parents. To fulfil that I yielded to their wish, and permitted them to arrange this terrible marriage with Henri Mathiste. But you little know how long I resisted, nor in what grief and tears I consented; neither can you guess how my indifference to him and my love for you has chafed the man they chose for me.'

" 'This, then, is the secret of Mathiste's hate to me,' said Louis. 'And do you mean to marry him, mademoiselle?'

" 'No, never,' answered Ernestine. 'It was to tell you so that I have dared to come here to-night. When I read your letter, I thought that surely you still loved me, and I felt that neither poverty, sickness, nor death could separate you from my love. But now—now that I hear your bitter words and see that I am unwelcome, I am sorry that I have troubled you.'

"She rose, blinded by tears, and put out her hands, gropingly, towards the door. At that instant Louis sprang to her side, and seized her.

" 'Ernestine,' he said, imploringly, 'forgive me! Much sorrow has made me mad.'

"Her head dropped upon his shoulder as he spoke, and they wept together.

" 'Ma tendre amie,' murmured Louis, as he held her in his arms, 'you have risked your name for me, and what can I do for you in return? Can I ask you to share this misery? No; I cannot be so selfish, so cruel. We must say farewell, Ernestine, and for ever. You will marry some good man, and forget me.'

" 'No, no,' she cried, 'we will wait, we will hope. Here, in the presence of your dear father who plighted us to each other, I swear I will never be any man's wife but yours. You will win success in time, and my parents will consent to our marriage.'

"There was no hope in Louis's heart as he listened to her words; to him all was blank poverty and despair; and he felt now he had been impulsive and selfish in disturbing her peace. Both knew that her rash deed, if not kept a strict secret, would bring on her ruin and disgrace.

"He drew her near that silent presence that had witnessed this interview, and uncovered the calm, white face. Unable to bear the sight without a burst of grief, he leant over the bed in tearless agony, while Ernestine's eyes overflowed, and, seeking to comfort him, she pressed her lips upon his cheek.

" 'My only friend,' he said gently, 'surely, knowing such a witness as this was here, the cruellest tongue would not dare to slander thee.'

"As he uttered the words there was a sudden noise upon the stairs; the door was flung open and there entered, white with fury, Ernestine's father and the elder Monsieur Mathiste, followed by an excited crowd.

" 'Infamous girl,' cried Monsieur Sarasin, as, with clenched hands, he advanced towards her, 'I did not believe you were so lost.'

" 'I told you she was here,' exclaimed Monsieur Mathiste, eagerly. 'Mademoiselle, you will consider your marriage with my son broken off, if you please.'

" 'I have written to him already to say so,' returned Ernestine, coldly. 'Father, listen to me!'

" 'Listen to you! I see you here, is not that enough?' roared Monsieur Sarrasin, in an agony of fury and distress.

" 'Monsieur,' said Louis, quietly, as he laid his hand upon his father's cold brow, '*here* is the witness of our interview. Your daughter has not been alone with me in this chamber, your dead friend has been with us.'

" Any other man would have been touched, but Monsieur Sarrasin was a miser, and a lover of money. So he turned away, dragging his daughter with him by the hand. It was Monsieur Mathiste who answered Louis's appeal.

" 'My friend,' he said to Monsieur Sarrasin, 'I am willing to believe the young man. Let us endeavour to hush up the matter. For my part, if mademoiselle will explain wherefore she came hither, and if she will promise never to speak to this person again, I will sign the contract to-morrow with pleasure. I know my son has set his heart on it.'

" 'Speak, Ernestine,' cried her father. 'What madness made you come to this place?'

" 'I came,' she said, 'to tell Louis that I would not marry Monsieur Henri Mathiste, and that I had been deceived with false reports regarding him, else I would never have given my consent to such a marriage. Monsieur,' she continued, addressing herself to Henri's father, 'I cannot give you the promise you desire, for I have just sworn, in this sacred presence, never to forsake Louis Dartôt while I have life.'

" The effect of her bold words is past telling. Most of the bystanders, judging according to their *own* measures, immediately set her down as utterly lost. Such a defiance of all propriety could only mean that she had already forfeited honour and duty.

" Monsieur Mathiste bowed to her, and departed without a word.

" 'You have ruined my daughter's prospects,' cried Monsieur Sarrasin; 'there is no refuge for her now but a convent. If I were a younger man I should blow your brains out.' So saying, he dragged away his weeping daughter, paying no heed to her prayers and expostulations.

" It is impossible to describe the hubbub this affair made. Enough, that the poor girl was shunned, and her character was irretrievably ruined. She bowed before the storm without a murmur, as she knew that in breaking through the rules of etiquette, to visit her lover in his dire affliction, she had sinned beyond forgiveness in the eyes of the world.

" Hearing these slanders, Louis presented himself at her father's

house, and formally demanded her hand without a *dôt*. His proposal was refused.

"Do you want to beg together?" asked Monsieur Sarrasin.

"And now the poor girl began to die slowly. She had fancied she had courage to bear the tide of slander and shame, this terrible isolation and hissing of tongues; but her health and spirits sank before it, and she presented to the un pitying world a white, woeful face, bearing the seal of death on its youthful brow.

"The sight maddened Louis Dartôt, but it did not enable him to coin money. At length a hurried line reached him saying just this:—

"Henri Mathiste has demanded my hand again. My father gives me two alternatives—to accept him or to enter a convent. After all that has been said it would be a shame, a dishonour in me, to marry any man but you. If you will not take me, I choose the convent."

"That night Louis Dartôt and Ernestine Sarrasin created that worst of French scandals—an elopement.

"It was a poor wan shadow that Louis took into his arms as she crept out guiltily from her father's door; and for many days she lay on the pallet bed in his bare lodging, hanging between life and death, exhausted with the patience of sorrow.

"Then followed her parents' enforced consent to her marriage, together with the settlement of the wretched pittance of four hundred francs a-year on her and her children. After this the young couple escaped from the scorn of the world and settled in the solitude of the Ardennes. Here Louis has cultivated a little land, and eked out a living by wood-cutting and other labours. He finds it a happier, freer life, he says, than toiling in an office. And, above all, what renders it dearer to him, is the fact that there is no cheating, no chicanery in it. There is not a lie in all the woods, he says; and, in digging up the earth, his spade never shows him the meanness, the insolence, the trickery, that man flung before his eyes when he strove to earn his bread like a *gentleman* in the crowded city.

"That's the love story, doctor."

III.

My friend knocked out the ashes from his pipe, refilled it, and placed it between his lips; then, with the first slow puff that issued therefrom, he remarked sarcastically—"And a very pretty kettle of fish it is. Is there no reconciling the old folks to these simpletons?"

"They have tried it at the birth of each child," said I, "but always vainly. There would be hope of anyone else but a miser; but, you see, the loss of his child is the saving of money to him, while reconciliation will mean spending it."

"He'll have to expend some now," answered the doctor, "or let his child die. That man will be helpless all the winter."

Well, I went to Trèves, and tried to soften the old miser, and the doctor tried also, and our prayers beat against a rock.

"She has deserted me and her mother in our old age," he said, "and now she wants my money. I tell you she shan't have it. I am glad the fellow is ill. I hope he'll die."

That was all I gained, and I went home with a sorrowful heart.

The winter came down upon the Ardennes early, and in grim earnest. Soon there was not a blade of grass or a green spot anywhere to be seen; the whole earth wore a mantle of snow, white, glistening, and durable. As the weeks went on the eye ached with the constant whiteness, and the ear longed for some sound—some note of bird or cry of beast to break the dead stillness of the winter. The cry came at last. Drawing nearer and nearer through the great woods, towards the borders where cottages and homesteads lay, it came—the cry of the famished wolf. Sometimes in pairs, sometimes in packs of three or four, these hungry prowlers came cringing round lonely dwellings, seeking what they could devour. In the still, frosty, starlight nights the sudden sight of their dusky forms passing swiftly, stealthily, over the snow, startled the solitary wayfarer from his security with a strange shudder of fear.

Through all this hard and bitter weather Louis Dartôt lay ill in his bed, or sat by the wood fire, weak and helpless. He had escaped the horrors of lockjaw, but suffering and anxiety brought on fever, and, prostrate with this, he seemed a dying man. The anguish of his mind and the miseries of poverty kept the fever in his veins, which riches and ease might have driven away. In vain neighbours helped and friends sent wine and nourishment: such aids could not make head against the strong tide of misfortune rolling over the hapless family. It was a painful task to go to the cottage and witness the sorrows of that bitter winter. The sick man in his bed, the two tiny children shivering over the fire, the little baby in its mother's arms, with pinched face and listless eyes full of pain, and, worst of all, the haggard, weary looks of the young wife herself, who, worn with woe and watching and over-work, went about a very ghost.

I had not told her of my vain attempt to soften her father's heart. I thought it best to spare her that pain. Perhaps this secrecy was unwise. I thought so when one day I found Louis sitting up in bed, with flushed face and eager eyes, reading a letter.

"She is gone!" he said, falling back on his pillow; "they will never let her return to this misery; they will keep her with them, and I shall die here alone. Take the children to her when I am gone. They will not be so hard as to shut their door against the little ones."

From the wildness of his eyes I thought him wandering in mind,

till he placed the letter in my hand and I read a few dry lines from Monsieur Sarrasin, coldly proposing to receive his daughter again in his home, on the condition that she came with only her youngest child, leaving her husband and the others to their fate.

"She cannot have accepted this inhuman proposal?" I exclaimed.

The unhappy invalid made no answer, but I saw his face change to the hue of death, as he turned it on the pillow to hide his tears.

"Louis," said I, pressing his hand, "I will send my house-keeper to you to-day, and if you will let me I will take the two children to my house."

"No, no," he returned, hurriedly. "I should go mad without them; the loneliness would be terrible."

I felt much shaken in mind as I walked homewards; Ernestine's departure seemed so cruel, so unlike herself. "She cannot mean to forsake them," I said to myself, constantly. But when the whole day and the night went by, bringing no tidings, I was forced to confess that the iron of poverty had entered into her soul, and the thought of ease and comfort in her father's house had been too great a temptation for her weakness.

Madame Rodière sat up with Louis Dartôt that night, and in the morning she came forth from the cottage door to meet me. "He has raved all night," she said. "Through all the slow hours he has cried 'Ernestine!' till the sound rang through my heart. She is a cruel woman to desert her dying husband and her children like this."

"Hush!" I answered. "Do not let us judge her; we know nothing."

Louis was sleeping, but he awoke suddenly, with a smile on his face.

"Is the snow still on the ground?" he said. "I dreamed I was walking in green fields with Ernestine, and the sunshine was warm about us, and there was no sorrow, neither was there any more pain. Is the snow gone?"

"No," I answered, "it is as deep and hard as it was a month ago; it looks as if it would hide the green earth from us for ever."

"For ever!" echoed Louis. "No, I saw fields and flowers in my sleep." Then suddenly he caught my hand, and said, eagerly:

"Is she come back? No? Well, I am not so cruel, when in my senses, as to wish her back. Tell her so, if you see her again when I am dead. Tell her I never reproached her. She has always done well, shall I not trust her now?"

The cold hours of the short bright day went on, bringing no tidings to the desolate man of the wife who had left him alone to die. Towards night he raved again, and the sharp cry of "Ernestine! Ernestine!" rang out into the cold, dark air.

I sat by his bed that night, and sometimes, when the fever lulled suddenly, his restless cries ceased, and looking at me with a wistful air he would murmur:

"It is but delirium. I am well nursed by your kindness, mon ami.

I do not really need her. Do not tell her I called for her. She is better, happier at home."

And in another moment, back came the old cry, ringing her name through the night silence.

At length he slept, and rising softly I laid logs upon the fire and sat down by it, with wistful thoughts for company.

A hurried footstep without and a sharp tap upon the door roused me, and I opened it swiftly lest the sleeper should be disturbed.

Upon the snow stood a stalwart peasant, with a face so white with ghastly fear that I started back amazed at him. He dashed within the door as I opened it, and stood by me, trembling.

"The *wolves are out*," he said, in a whisper. Then I understood his fear, and looking across the snow, I saw four or five black forms creeping cowardly away. I closed the door safely, and led the man by the fire.

"The beasts followed me all across the hill," he said, "walking on either side, waiting for me to trip or fall. I had this stout stick with me, so they dared not spring. The cowards rarely attack a man. But it was warm work walking a league with those black devils on either side of me. However, here's the letter. It might have cost me my life to bring it, but a promise is a promise, and she seemed so terribly in earnest over it."

I seized impatiently the letter which his slow fingers had drawn from his vest, and placed it in Louis's hands. It was from Ernestine.

"My love," she wrote, "I dared not tell you I was going, because I feared you would not let me undertake so terrible a journey on foot. But I have not walked all the way, *le bon Dieu* has sent me many helps. I thought I would show my little baby to my mother and soften her heart. I thought I would throw myself at my father's feet, and tell him how ill you were, and that I—his only child—lived on the charity of strangers. Oh, Louis, I hoped to move him by my prayers and tears, but I have wept and implored in vain. He would only repeat the cruel offer he made in his letter—as if I would ever leave thee, dearest, till God parts us. So I am coming home again, darling, with my little one, and my mother has given me two hundred francs from her savings, and this little sum will greatly aid us. I trust to find thee better and more cheerful. Take heart, Louis, this money will help us through the winter, and when spring comes thou wilt work again. To return to thee quicker, I spend ten francs for a seat in the diligence, which will set me down only a league from home. Adieu till to-morrow, my love, when I shall kiss thee and the little ones again."

"I knew she was true and faithful," said Louis, laying down the letter with a happy smile.

I took it up and looked at the date. Why, it was this night—this very night she was coming back.

"We ought to have had the letter yesterday," I said to the countryman.

"Yes, but my cart and horse got into a bank of snow, and I had to get men to dig them out. The poor beast was nearly dead. I had to leave him at Bastoigne, and walk the rest of the way."

As he spoke a sudden thought chilled my blood. Ernestine was going to walk a league across the hills, and the *wolves were out*! Almost paralyzed by fear I drew the man aside, and bade him load Louis's gun and get the lantern lighted.

"The diligence sets her down at eleven o'clock," I said. "We have not a moment to lose. Wolves are such cowards that if they have ventured to draw near her, they will flee at the first signs of our coming."

"I am not going," returned the peasant, sturdily. "I have faced a pack of wolves once to-night: I don't do that a second time, *merci!*"

Nothing would move him, so I was compelled to tell Louis that I left him there as his companion.

"And I am going to meet Ernestine," I said. "She may want help."

"It is a cold walk for her," returned Louis, having no other fear in his heart. "Have you any wine with you?"

In his joy at his wife's return he seemed to have forgotten his weakness and his fever. I uttered not a word to alarm him, but hurried away with a frightful foreboding at my heart.

IV.

It took me a good half-hour to reach the village, where I roused the men, and, armed with all kinds of weapons, we departed for that point on the high road where the diligence stopped to put down passengers. All was blank here, and on the hard, frozen road it was vain to look for marks of wheels. The hour, however, convinced me the diligence had long gone by, and set down its frail freight to fight her way through cold and darkness over the bleak snow-covered steppes. The men were hopeful of her safety.

"She is used to the Ardennes," they said; "she knows the shapes of the hills, and will find her way by these. And as to wolves, we have not seen any on our road."

For two hours we shouted Ernestine's name aloud, we went from steppe to steppe, we descended the rugged sides of deep valleys, and searched among snow rifts, our fears growing on us, and hope sinking as we went. At length, as, with our sticks and guns aiding us, we toiled up the snowy side of a great hill, there fled by us like the wind a dusky form. Then another and another passed, then three together, and a voice shouted—

"Wolves! fire! fire."

One or two guns went off at random, but no shot took effect, and the brutes vanished like shadows.

At the top of this hill stood that solitary twisted tree of which I have spoken, and I know not what instinct impelled me to it, but I made straight for this with a feeling of horror indescribable. The men followed, whispering ominously.

"So they *are* out—and fiendish with famine. They don't fear women and children then."

Breathless, I struggled on. At the foot of the tree the moonlight showed us something lying strangely still. Another instant, and we were near enough to cry "It is a woman!"

I sprang forward, and knelt by her side on the hard snow.

Our arrival had driven the brutes from their prey, but not before cold and horror had put an end to the life of Ernestine Dartôt.

Doubtless she had come to the tree for shelter, and here for a long while she had stood at bay, the wolves still fearing to touch her. We knew this by the marks of their feet, showing where they had walked round and round the tree in a cruel circle, glaring on her with hungry eyes. We knew it by a more pitiful token still. Here, high up as she could reach, was her little infant wrapped in her shawl, and tied safely to a branch. Doubtless she had died defending it.

The child's sudden cry made many men there weep; and it was with very tender hands we unfastened it from its wild cradle, and then looked upon its little white face.

"She has died of cold and terror," said the soldier, Fifine's husband, as he raised her, softly. "You see, when she took off her shawl to wrap round the child, she had no protection against the bitter wind. And then the wolves, walking round and round her, must have made her heart die within her. Look you! They had not touched her."

It was the sole comfort he could give us.

We carried her home—the mournfullest procession that heart could dream of—and laid her down out of her husband's sight.

Then a woman, one whom his wife had loved, broke the truth gently to him. But how could such a truth fall gently on his bruised spirit? He lost the sense and meaning of her words before the tale was finished, and talking of his dream and the fields, where he would walk with Ernestine when the snow was gone, he died.

In the afternoon of the day following that sad night there came across the steppes at a rapid pace a light calèche, drawn by a strong horse, rough shod. I stood aside to let it pass, but the driver pulled up and asked the way to the cottage of Louis Dartôt. "You can hardly drive thither," I answered.

Then a hard face thrust itself from beneath the hood and accosted me. "I will walk there if you will show me the way, sir."

Knowing who he was, I bowed to him, and led him towards the cottage silently.

"They are well, I suppose," he said, uneasily. "My daughter left me yesterday with—with her child, and—well, in fact, her mother has persuaded me that she looks ill, and wants better things than that sad scamp, her husband, can give her. Yesterday I offered to take her and the children, which was very liberal on my part. I had at first proposed taking only herself. She refused these offers of reconciliation. She would never leave her husband, she said. It seems the man is ill."

I was still silent.

"He is no worse, I trust," continued Monsieur Sarrasin, more and more uneasy at my looks. "The truth is, I am come to-day—madame desiring it so earnestly—to take them *all* back to Trèves. Will my daughter's husband be able to bear the journey, sir?"

"He will never go but one journey more, Monsieur, and that is to his grave. He is dead."

The miser held himself erect under this blow, but I saw his eyelids quiver.

"Poor Ernestine," he said, softly. "She loved him, she will feel this separation deeply, but she will recover it, sir—she will recover. Her mother and I will be tender to her."

"There is no separation between those two, Monsieur Sarrasin," said I. "They were 'lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they are not divided.'"

"What do you mean?" cried the wretched man, clutching me by the arm. "What are you saying?"

His face was ghastly white, and his lips trembling.

"I am saying your daughter is with her husband: come and see her."

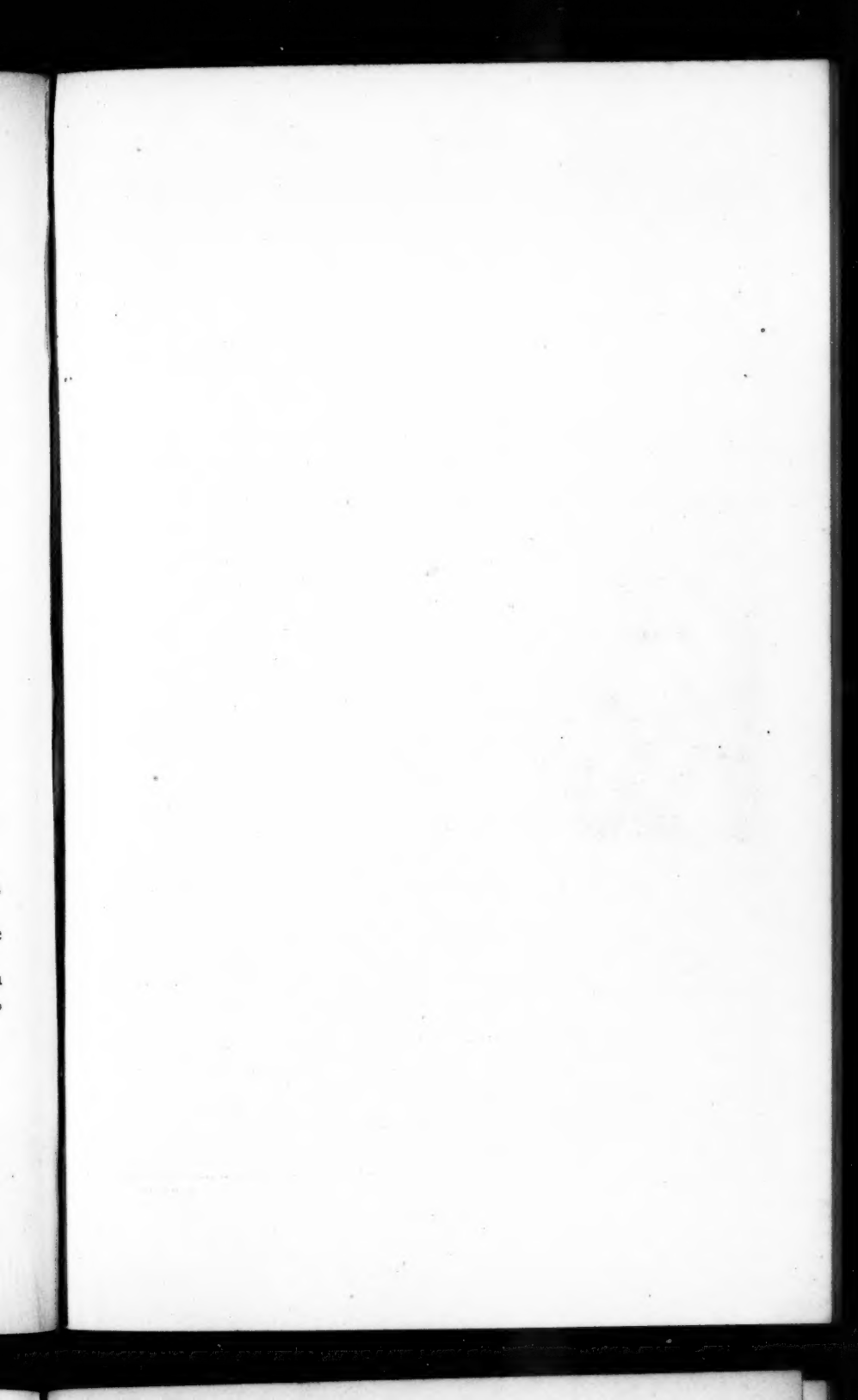
The grief of the old is terrible; I will not dwell on it.

"She was brave always," he said, as he looked upon the courageous woman who had defended and saved her child.

When he went away with the children, I saw he held the little one close against his breast.

Poor old man! As in years to come he cherishes that grandson fondly, will he ever look upon his face without seeing also the fair, sad face of the daughter he forgave too late?







M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J. SWAIN.

COMING HOME.